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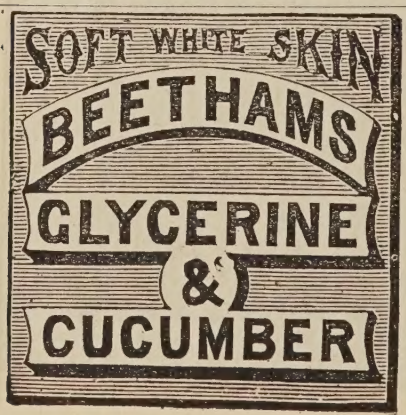

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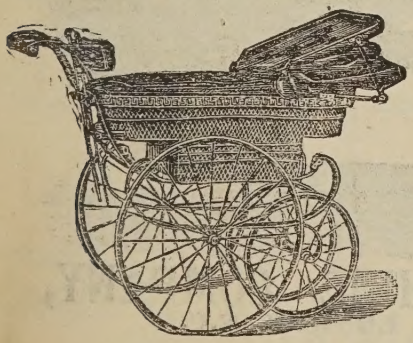

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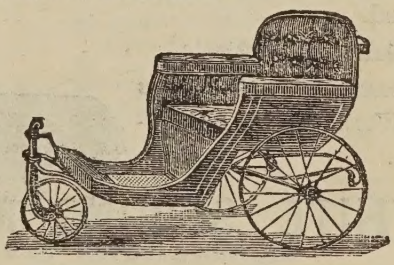

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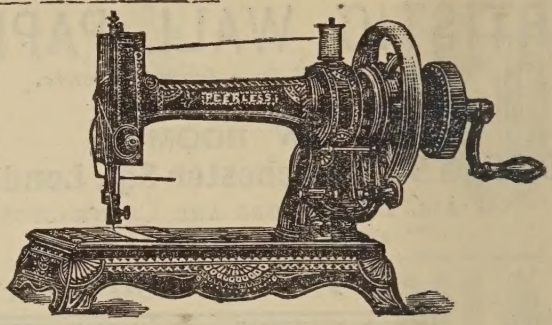

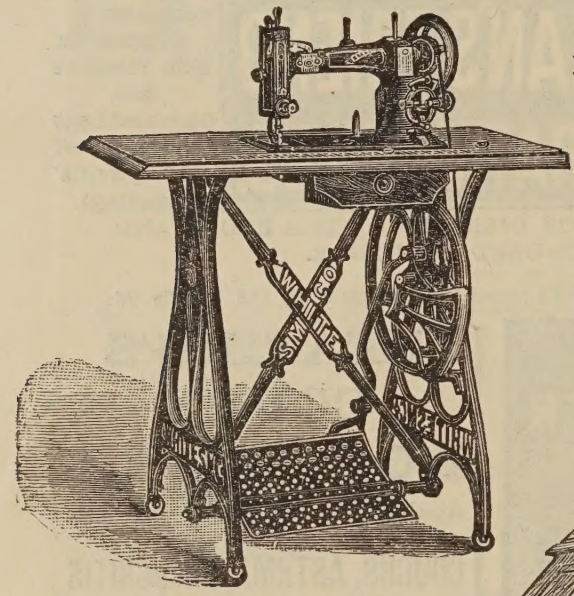

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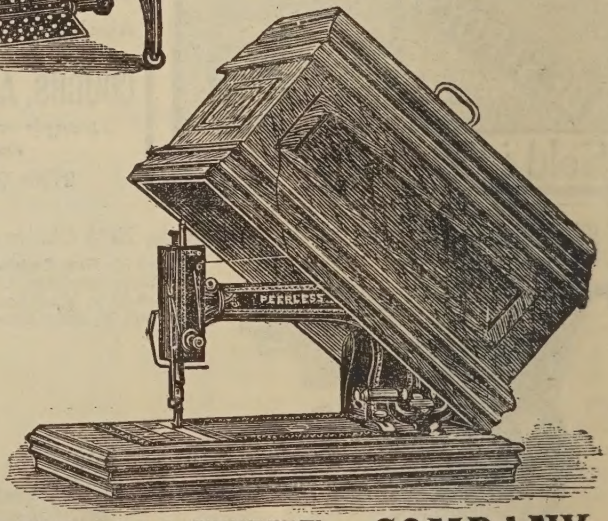

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DAVID POINDEXTER'S DISAPPEARANCE.

Among the records of the English state trials are to be found many strange stories, which would, as the phrase is, make the fortune of a modern novelist. But there are also numerous cases, not less stimulating to imagination and curiosity, which never attained more than local notoriety, of which the law was able to take but comparatively small cognizance, although they became subjects of much unofficial discussion and mystification. Among these cases none, perhaps, is better worth recalling than that of David Poindexter. It will be my aim here to tell the tale as simply and briefly as possible—to repeat it, indeed, very much as it came to my ears while living, several years ago, near the scene in which its events took place. There is a temptation to amplify it, and to give it a more recent date and

a different setting; but (other considerations aside) the story might lose in force and weight more than it would thereby gain in artistic balance and smoothness.

David Poindexter was a younger son of an old and respected family in Sussex, England. He was born in London in 1785. He was educated at Oxford, with a view to his entering the clerical profession, and in the year 1810 he obtained a living in the little town of Witton, near Twickenham, known historically as the home of Sir John Suckling. The Poindexters had been much impoverished by the excesses of David's father and grandfather, and David seems to have had few or no resources beyond the very modest stipend appertaining to his position. He was, at all events, poor, though possessed of capacities which bade fair to open to him some of the higher prizes of his calling; but, on the other hand, there is evidence that he chafed at his poverty, and reason to believe that he had inherited no small share of the ill-regulated temperament which had proved so detrimental to the elder generations of his family.

Personally he was a man of striking aspect,

having long, dark hair, heavily-marked eyebrows, and blue eyes; his mouth and chin were graceful in contour, but wanting in resolution; his figure was tall, well knit, and slender. He was an eloquent preacher, and capable, when warmed by his subject, of powerfully affecting the emotions of his congregation. He was a great favorite with women — whom, however, he uniformly treated with coldness—and by no means unpopular with men, toward some of whom he manifested much less reserve. Nevertheless, before the close of the second year of his incumbency he was known to be paying his addresses to a young lady of the neighborhood, Miss Edith Saltine, the only child of an ex-army officer. The colonel was a widower, and in poor health, and since he was living mainly on his half-pay, and had very little to give his daughter, the affair was looked upon as a love match, the rather since Edith was a handsome young woman of charming character. The Reverend David Poindexter certainly had every appearance of being deeply in love; and it is often seen that the passions of reserved men, when once aroused, are stronger than those of persons more generally demonstrative.

Colonel Saltine did not at first receive his proposed son-in-law with favor. He was a valetudinarian, and accustomed to regard his daughter as his nurse by right, and he resented the idea of her leaving him forlorn for the sake of a good-looking parson. It is very likely that his objections might have had the effect of breaking off the match, for his daughter was devotedly attached to him, and hardly questioned his right to dispose of her as he saw fit; but after a while the worthy gentleman seems to have thought better of his contrariness. Poindexter had strong persuasive powers, and no doubt made himself personally agreeable to the colonel, and, moreover, it was arranged that the latter should occupy the same house with Mr. and Mrs. Poindexter after they were married. Nevertheless, the colonel was not a man to move rapidly, and the engagement had worn along for nearly a year without the wedding-day having been fixed. One winter evening in the early part of December, Poindexter dined with the colonel and Edith, and as the gentlemen were sitting over their wine the lover spoke on the topic that was uppermost in his thoughts, and asked his host whether there was

any good reason why the marriage should not be consummated at once.

"Christmas is at hand," the young man remarked; "why should it not be rendered doubly memorable by granting this great boon?"

"For a parson, David, you are a deuced impatient man," the colonel said.

"Parsons are human," the other exclaimed with warmth.

"Humph! I suppose some of them are. In fact, David, if I didn't believe that there was something more in you than texts and litanies and the Athanasian creed, I'll be hanged if I'd ever have let you look twice at Edith. That girl has got blood in her veins, David; she's not to be thrown away on any lantern-jawed, white-livered doctor of souls, I can tell you."

David held his head down, and seemed not to intend a reply; but he suddenly raised his eyes, and fixed them upon the colonel's. "You know what my father was," he said, in a low, distinct voice; "I am my father's son."

"That idea has occurred to me more than once, David, and to say the truth, I've liked you none the less for it. But, then, what the deuce

should a fellow like you want to do in a pulpit? I respect the cloth as much as any man, I hope, but leaving theory aside, and coming down to practice, aren't there fools and knaves enough in the world to carry on that business, without a fellow of heart and spirit like you going into it?"

"Theory or no theory, there have been as great men in the pulpit as in any other position," said David, gloomily.

"I don't say to the contrary: ecclesiastical history, and all that: but what I do say is, if a man is great in the pulpit, it's a pity he isn't somewhere else, where he could use his greatness to more advantage."

"Well," remarked David, in the same somber tone, "I am not contented: so much I can admit to the father of the woman I love. But you know as well as I do that men nowadays are called to my profession not so much by the Divine summons as by the accident of birth. Were it not for the law of primogeniture, Colonel Saltine, the Church of England would be, for the most part, a congregation without a clergyman."

"Gad! I'm much of your opinion," returned the colonel, with a grin; "but there are two

doors, you know, for a second son to enter the world by. If he doesn't fancy a cassock, he can put on His Majesty's uniform."

"Neither the discipline nor the activity of a soldier's life would suit me," David answered. "So far as I know my own nature, what it craves is freedom, and the enjoyment of its capacities. Only under such conditions could I show what I am capable of. In other words," he added, with a short laugh, "ten thousand a year is the profession I should choose."

"Ah," murmured the colonel, heaving a sigh, "I doubt that's a profession we'd all of us like to practice as well as preach. What! no more wine? Oh, ay, Edith, of course! Well, go to her, sir, if you must; but when you come to my age you'll have found out which wears the best—woman or the bottle. I'll join you presently, and maybe we'll see what can be done about this marrying business."

So David went to Edith, and they had a clear hour together before they heard the colonel's slippered tread hobbling through the hall. Just before he opened the door, David had said:

"I sometimes doubt whether you wholly love me, after all." And she had answered:

"If I do not, it is because I sometimes feel as if you were not your real self."

The colonel heard nothing of this odd bit of dialogue; but when he had subsided, with his usual grunt, into his arm-chair beside the fire-place, and Edith had brought him his foot-stool and his pipe, and put the velvet skull-cap on his bald pate, he drew a long whiff of tobacco smoke, and said:

"If you young folks want to set up housekeeping a month from to-day, you can do it, for all I care."

Little did any one of the three suspect what that month was destined to bring forth.

David Poindexter's father had been married twice, his second wife dying within a year of her wedding-day, and two weeks after bringing David into the world. This lady, whose maiden name was Lambert, had a brother who was a gentleman farmer, and a tolerably successful one. His farm was situated in the parish of Witton, and he owned a handsome house on the outskirts of the town itself. He and David's father had been at one time great friends, insomuch that David was named after

him, and Lambert, as his godfather as well as uncle, presented the child with the usual silver mug. Lambert was never known to have married, but there were rumors, dating as far as back David's earliest recollections, to the effect that he had entertained a secret and obscure passion for some foreign woman of great beauty, but of doubtful character and antecedents. Nobody could be found who had ever seen this woman, or would accept the responsibility of asserting that she actually existed; but she afforded a convenient means of accounting for many things that seemed mysterious in Mr. Lambert's conduct. At length, when David was about eight years old, his godfather left England abruptly, and without telling any one whither he was going or when he would return. As a matter of fact he never did return, nor had any certain news ever been heard of him since his departure. Neither his house nor his farm was ever sold, however, though they were rented to more than one tenant during a number of years. It was said, also, that Lambert held possession of some valuable real estate in London. Nevertheless, in process of time he was forgotten, or remembered only as a name. And

the new generation of men, though they might speak of "the old Lambert House," neither knew nor cared how it happened to have that title. For aught they could tell, it might have borne it ever since Queen Elizabeth's time. Even David Poindexter had long ceased to think of his uncle as anything much more substantial than a dream.

He was all the more surprised, therefore, when, on the day following the interview just mentioned, he received a letter from the late David Lambert's lawyers. It informed him in substance that his uncle had died in Constantinople, unmarried (so far as could be ascertained), intestate, and without blood-relations surviving him. Under these circumstances, his property, amounting to one hundred and sixty thousand pounds, the bulk of which was invested in land and houses in the city of London, as well as the country-seat in Witton known as the old Lambert House, and the farm lands thereto appertaining — all this wealth, not to mention four or five thousand pounds in ready money, came into possession of the late David Lambert's nearest of kin, who, as it appeared, was none other than the Reverend David Poindexter. Would that gentleman, there-

fore, be kind enough, at his convenience, to advise his obedient servants as to what disposition he wished to make of his inheritance?

It was a Saturday morning, and the young clergyman was sitting at his study table; the fire was burning in the grate at his right hand, and his half-written sermon lay on the desk before him. After reading the letter, at first hurriedly and amazedly, afterward more slowly, with frequent pauses, he folded it up, and, still holding it in his hand, leaned back in his chair, and remained for the better part of an hour in a state of deep preoccupation. Many changing expressions passed across his face, and glowed in his dark-blue eyes, and trembled on the curves of his lips. At last he roused himself, sat erect, and smote the table violently with his clinched hand. Yes, it was true—it was real; he, David Poindexter, an hour ago the poor imprisoned clergyman of the Church of England—he, as by a stroke of magic, was free, powerful, emancipated, the heir of seven thousand pounds a year! And what about to-morrow's sermon?

He rose up smiling, with a vivid color in his cheeks and a bright sparkle in his eyes. He

stretched himself to his full height, threw out his arms, and smote his chest with both fists. What a load was gone from his heart! What a new ardor of life was this that danced in his veins! He walked with long strides to the window, and threw it wide open, breathing in the rush of bright icy air with deep inhalations. Freedom! emancipation! Yonder, above the dark, level boughs of the cedar of Lebanon, rose the square, gray tower of the church. Yesterday it was the incubus of his vain hopes; to-day it was the tomb of a dead and despised past. What had David Poindexter to do with calling sinners to repentance? Let him first find out for himself what sin was like. Then he looked to the right, where between the leafless trees Colonel Saltine's little dwelling raised its red-tile roof above the high garden-wall. And so, Edith, you doubted whether I were at all times my real self? You shall not need to make that complaint hereafter. As for to-morrow's sermon—I am not he who wrote sermons, nor shall I ever preach any. Away with it, therefore!

He strode back to the table, took up the sheets of manuscript from the desk, tore them across,

and laid them on the burning coals. They smoldered for a moment, then blazed up, and the draught from the open window whisked the blackened ashes up the chimney. David stood, meanwhile, with his arms folded, smiling to himself, and repeating, in a low voice:

"Never again—never again—never again."

By-and-by he reseated himself at his desk, and hurriedly wrote two or three notes, one of which was directed to Miss Saltine. He gave them to his servant with an injunction to deliver them at their addresses during the afternoon. Looking at his watch, he was surprised to find that it was already past twelve o'clock. He went up-stairs, packed a small portmanteau, made some changes in his dress, and came down again with a buoyant step. There was a decanter half full of sherry on the sideboard in the dining-room; he poured out and drank two glasses in succession. This done, he put on his hat, and left the house with his portmanteau in his hand, and ten minutes later he had intercepted the London coach, and was bowling along on his way to the city.

There was a dramatic instinct in David, as in many eloquent men of impressionable tempera-

ment, which caused him every now and then to look upon all that was occurring as a sort of play, and to resolve to act his part in a telling and picturesque manner. On that Saturday afternoon he had an interview with the late Mr. Lambert's lawyers, and they were struck by his calm, lofty, and indifferent bearing. He seemed to regard worldly prosperity as a thing beneath him, yet to feel in a half-impatient way the responsibility which the control of wealth forced upon him.

"It is my purpose not to allow this legacy to interfere permanently with my devotion to my higher duties," he remarked, "but I have taken measures to enable myself to place these affairs upon a fixed and convenient footing. I presume," he added, fixing his eyes steadily upon his interlocutor, "that you have thoroughly investigated the possibility of there being any claimant nearer than myself?"

"No such claimant could exist," the lawyer replied, "unless the late Mr. Lambert had married and had issue."

"Is there, then, any reason to suppose that he contemplated the contingency that has happened?"

"If he bestowed any thought at all upon the subject, that contingency could hardly have failed to present itself to his mind," the lawyer answered.

David consented to receive the draft for a thousand pounds which was tendered him, and took his leave. He returned to his rooms at the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden. In the evening, after making some changes in his costume, he went to the theatre, and saw Kean play something of Shakespeare's. When the play was over, and he was out in the frosty air again, he felt it impossible to sleep. It was after midnight before he returned to his hotel, with flushed cheeks, and a peculiar brilliance in his eyes. He slept heavily, but awoke early in the morning with a slight feeling of feverishness. It was Sunday morning. He thought of his study in the parsonage at Witton, with its bright fire, its simplicity, its repose. He thought of the church, and of the congregation which he would never face again. And Edith—what had been her thoughts and dreams during the night? He got up, and went to the window. It looked out upon a narrow, inclosed court. The sky was dingy, the air was full

of the muffled tumult of the city. His present state, as to its merely external aspect, was certainly not so agreeable as that of the morning before. Ay, but what a vista had opened now which then was closed! David dressed himself, and went down to his breakfast. While sitting at his table in the window, looking out upon the market-place, and stirring his cup of Mocha, a gentleman came up and accosted him.

"Am I mistaken, or is your name Poindexter?"

David looked up, and recognized Harwood Courtney, a son of Lord Derwent. Courtney was a man of fashion, a member of the great clubs, and a man, as they say, with a reputation. He was a good twenty years older than David, and had been the companion of the latter's father in some of his wildest escapades. To David, at this moment, he was the representative and symbol of that great, splendid, unregenerate world, with which it was his purpose to make acquaintance.

"You are not mistaken, Mr. Courtney," he said, quietly. "Have you breakfasted? It is some time since we have met."

"Why, yes, egad! If I remember right, you

were setting out on another road than that which I was travelling. However, we sinners, you know, depend upon you parsons to pull us up in time to prevent any—er—any *very* serious catastrophe! Ha! ha!"

"I understand you; but for my part I have left the pulpit," said David, uttering the irrevocable words with a carelessness which he himself wondered at.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Courtney, with a little intonation of surprise and curiosity, which his good breeding prevented him from formulating more explicitly. As David made no rejoinder, he presently continued: "Then—er—perhaps you might find it in your way to dine with me this evening. Only one or two friends—a very quiet Sunday party."

"Thank you," said David. "I had intended going to bed betimes to-night; but it will give me pleasure to meet a quiet party."

"Then that's settled," exclaimed Courtney; "and meanwhile, if you've finished your coffee, what do you say to a turn in the Row? I've got my trap here, and a breath of air will freshen us up."

David and Courtney spent the day together, and by evening the young ex-clergyman had made the acquaintance of many of the leading men about town. He had also allowed the fact to transpire that his pecuniary standing was of the soundest kind; but this was done so skillfully —with such a lofty air—that even Courtney, who was as cynical as any man, was by no means convinced that David's change of fortune had anything to do with his relinquishing the pulpit. "David Poindexter is no fool," he remarked, confidentially, to a friend. "He has double the stuff in him that the old fellow had. You must get up early to get the better of a man who has been a parson, and seen through himself!"

David, in fact, felt himself the superior, intellectually and by nature, of most of the men he saw. He penetrated and comprehended them, but to them he was impenetrable; a certain air of authority rested upon him; he had abandoned the service of God; but the training whereby he had fitted himself for it stood him in good stead; it had developed his insight, his subtlety, and, strange to say, his powers of dissimulation. Contrary to what is popularly supposed, his study of

the affairs of the other world had enabled him to deal with this world's affairs with a half-contemptuous facility. As for the minor technicalities, the social pass-words, and so forth, to which much importance is generally ascribed, David had nothing to fear from them; first, because he was a man of noble manners, naturally as well as by cultivation; and, secondly, because the fact that he had been a clergyman acted as a sort of breastplate against criticism. It would be thought that he chose to appear ignorant of that which he really knew.

As for Mr. Courtney's dinner, though it may doubtless have been a quiet one from his point of view, it differed considerably from such Sunday festivities as David had been accustomed to. A good deal of wine was drunk, and the conversation (a little cautious at first, on David's account) gradually thawed into freedom. It was late when they rose from table; and then a proposition was made to go to a certain well-known club in St. James's Street. David went with the rest, and, for the first time in his life, played cards for money; he lost seven hundred pounds — more money than he had handled during the last three

years—but he kept his head, and at three o'clock in the morning drove with Courtney to the latter's lodgings, with five hundred pounds in his pocket over and above the sum with which he had begun to play. Here was a wonderful change in his existence; but it did not seem to him half so wonderful as his reason told him it was. It seemed natural—as if, after much wandering, he had at last found his way into the place where he belonged. It is said that savages, educated from infancy amid civilized surroundings, will, on breathing once more their native air, tear off their clothes and become savages again. Somewhat similar may have been David's case, who, inheriting in a vivid degree the manly instincts of his forefathers, had forcibly and by constraint of circumstances lived a life wholly opposed to these impulses—an artificial life, therefore. But now at length he had come into his birthright, and felt at home.

One episode of the previous evening remained in his memory: it had produced an effect upon him out of proportion with its apparent significance. A gentleman, a guest at the dinner, a small man with sandy hair and keen gray eyes, on

being presented to David had looked at him with an expression of shrewd perplexity, and said:

"Have we not met before?"

"It is possible, but I confess I do not recollect it," replied David.

"The name was not Poindexter," continued the other, "but the face—pardon me—I could have taken my oath to."

"Where did this meeting take place?" asked David, smiling.

"In Paris, at ——'s," said the gray-eyed gentleman (mentioning the name of a well-known French nobleman).

"You are quite certain of that?"

"Yes. It was but a month since."

"I was never in Paris. For three years I have hardly been out of sight of London," David answered. "What was your friend's name?"

"It has slipped my memory," he replied. "An Italian name, I fancy. But he was a man—pardon me—of very striking appearance, and I conversed with him for more than an hour."

Now it is by no means an uncommon occurrence for two persons to bear a close resemblance to each other, but (aside from the fact that David

was anything but an ordinary-looking man) this mistake of his new acquaintance affected him oddly. He involuntarily associated it with the internal and external transformation which had happened to him, and said to himself:

"This counterpart of mine was prophetic: he was what I am to be—what I am." And fantastic though the notion was, he could not rid himself of it.

David returned to Witton about the middle of the week. In the interval he had taken measures to make known to those concerned the revolution of his affairs, and to have the old Lambert mansion opened, and put in some sort of condition for his reception. He had gone forth on foot, an unknown, poor, and humble clergyman; he returned driving behind a pair of horses, by far the most important personage in the town; and yet this outward change was far less great than the change within. His reception could scarcely be called cordial; though not wanting in the technical respect and ceremony due to him as a gentleman of wealth and influence, he could perceive a half-concealed suspense and misgiving, due unmistakably to his attitude as a recreant clergyman.

In fact, his worthy parishioners were in a terrible quandary how to reconcile their desire to stand well with their richest fellow-townsman, and their dismayed recognition of that townsman's scandalous professional conduct. David smiled at this, but it made him bitter too. He had intended once more to call the congregation together, and frankly to explain to them the reasons, good or bad, which had induced him to withdraw from active labor in the church. But now he determined to preserve a proud and indifferent silence. There was only one person who had a right to call him to account, and it was not without fearfulness that he looked forward to his meeting with her. However, the sooner such fears are put at rest the better, and he called upon Edith on the evening of his arrival. Her father had been in bed for two days with a cold, and she was sitting alone in the little parlor.

She rose at his entrance with a deep blush, and a look of mixed gladness and anxiety. Her eyes swiftly noted the change in his dress, for he had considerably modified, though not as yet wholly laid aside, the external marks of his profession. She held back from him with a certain

strangeness and timidity, so that he did not kiss her cheek, but only her hand. The first words of greeting were constrained and conventional, but at last he said:

"All is changed, Edith, except our love for each other."

"I do not hold you to that," she answered, quickly.

"But you can not turn me from it," he said, with a smile.

"I do not know you yet," said she, looking away.

"When I last saw you, you said you doubted whether I were my real self. I have become my real self since then."

"Because you are not what you were, it does not follow that you are what you should be."

"Surely, Edith, that is not reasonable. I was what circumstances forced me to be, henceforth I shall be what God made me."

"Did God, then, have no hand in those circumstances?"

"Not more, at all events, than in these."

Edith shook her head. "God does not absolve us from holy vows."

"But how if I can not, with loyalty to my inner conscience, hold to those vows?" exclaimed David, with more warmth. "I have long felt that I was not fitted for this sacred calling. Before the secret tribunal of my self-knowledge, I have stood charged with the sin of hypocrisy. It has been God's will that I be delivered from that sin."

"Why did you not say that before, David?" she demanded, looking at him. "Why did you remain a hypocrite until it was for your worldly benefit to abandon your trust? Can you say, on your word of honor, that you would stand where you do now if you were still poor instead of rich?"

"Men's eyes are to some extent opened and their views are confirmed by events. They make our dreams and forebodings into realities. We question in our minds, and events give us the answers."

"Such an argument might excuse any villainy," said Edith, lifting her head indignantly.

"Villany! Do you use that word to me?" exclaimed David.

"Not unless your own heart bids me—and I do not know your heart."

"Because you do not love me?"

"You may be right," replied Edith, striving to steady her voice; "but at least I believed I loved you."

"You are cured of that belief, it seems—as I am cured of many foolish faiths," said David, with gloomy bitterness. "Well, so be it! The love that waits upon a fastidious conscience is never the deepest love. My love is not of that complexion. Were it possible that the shadow of sin, or of crime itself, could descend upon you, it would but render you dearer to me than before."

"You may break my heart, David, if you will," cried the girl, tremulously, yet resolutely, "but I reverence love more than I love you."

David had turned away as if to leave the room, but he paused and confronted her once more.

"At any rate, we will understand each other," said he. "Do you make it your condition that I should go back to the ministry?"

Edith was still seated, but the condition of the

crisis compelled her to rise. She stood before him, her dark eyes downcast, her lips trembling, nervously drawing the fingers of one hand through the clasp of the other. She was tempted to yield to him, for she could imagine no happi ness in life without him; but a rare sanity and integrity of mind made her perceive that he had pushed the matter to a false alternative. It was not a question of preaching or not preaching sermons, but of sinful apostasy from an upright life. At last she raised her eyes, which shone like dark jewels in her pale countenance, and said, slowly, "We had better part."

"Then my sins be upon your head!" cried David, passionately.

The blood mounted to her cheeks at the injustice of this rejoinder, but she either could not or would not answer again. She remained erect and proud until the door had closed between them; what she did after that neither David nor any one else knew.

The apostate David seems to have determined that, if she were to bear the burden of his sins, they should be neither few nor light. His life for many weeks after this interview was a scandal

and a disgrace. The old Lambert mansion was the scene of carousals and excesses such as recalled the exploits of the monks of Medmenham. Harwood Courtney, and a score of dissolute gentlemen like him, not to speak of other visitors, thronged the old house day and night; drinking, gaming, and yet wilder doings gave the sober little town no rest, till the Reverend David Poindexter was commonly referred to as the Wicked Parson. Meanwhile Edith Saltine bore herself with a grave, pale impassiveness, which some admired, others wondered at, and others deemed an indication that she had no heart. If she had not, so much the better for her; for her father was almost as difficult to manage as David himself. The old gentleman could neither comprehend nor forgive what seemed to him his daughter's immeasurable perversity. One day she had been all for marrying a poor, unknown preacher; and the next day, when to marry him meant to be the foremost lady in the neighborhood, she dismissed him without appeal. And the worst of it was that, much as the poor colonel's mouth watered at the feasts and festivities of the Lambert mansion, he was prevented by the fatality of his position

from taking any part in them. So Edith could find no peace either at home or abroad; and if it dwelt not in her own heart, she was indeed forlorn.

What may have been the cost of all this dissipation it was difficult to say, but several observant persons were of opinion that the parson's income could not long stand it. There were rumors that he had heavy bills owing in several quarters, which he could pay only by realizing some of his investments. On the other hand, it was said that he played high and constantly, and usually had the devil's luck. But it is impossible to gauge the truth of such stories, and the Wicked Parson himself took no pains either to deny or confirm them. He was always the loudest, the gayest, and the most reckless of his company, and the leader and inspirer of all their wild proceedings; but it was noticed that, though he laughed often, he never smiled; and that his face, when in repose, bore traces of anything but happiness. For some cause or other, moreover — but whether maliciously or remorsefully was open to question—he never entirely laid aside his clerical garb; he seemed either to delight in profaning it,

or to retain it as the reminder and scourge of his own wickedness.

One night there was a great gathering up at the mansion, and the noise and music were kept up till well past the small hours of the morning. Gradually the guests departed, some going toward London, some elsewhere. At last only Harwood Courtney remained, and he and David sat down in the empty dining-room, disorderly with the remains of the carousal, to play picquet. They played, with short intermissions, for nearly twenty-four hours. At last David threw down his cards, and said, quietly:

"Well, that's all. Give me until to-morrow."

"With all the pleasure in life, my boy," replied the other; "and your revenge, too, if you like. Meanwhile, the best thing we can do is to take a nap."

"You may do so if you please," said David; "for my part, I must take a turn on horseback first. I can never sleep till I have breathed fresh air."

They parted accordingly, Courtney going to his room, and David to the stables, whence he

presently issued, mounted on his bay mare, and rode eastward. On his way he passed Colonel Saltine's house, and drew rein for a moment beside it, looking up at Edith's window. It was between four and five o'clock of a morning in early April; the sky was clear, and all was still and peaceful. As he sat in the saddle looking up, the blind of the window was raised and the sash itself opened, and Edith, in her white night-dress, with her heavy brown hair falling round her face and on her shoulders, gazed out. She regarded him with a half-bewildered expression, as if doubting of his reality, For a moment they remained thus; then he waved his hand to her with a wild gesture of farewell, and rode on, passing immediately out of sight behind the dark foliage of the cedar of Lebanon.

On reaching the London high-road the horseman paused once more, and seemed to hesitate what course to pursue; but finally he turned to the right, and rode in a southerly direction. The road wound gently, and dipped and rose to cross low hills; trees bordered the way on each side; and as the sun rose they threw long shadows westward, while the birds warbled and twittered in

the fields and hedges. By-and-by a clump of woodland came into view about half a mile off, the road passing through the midst of it. As David entered it at one end, he saw, advancing toward him through the shade and sunlight, a rider mounted on a black horse. The latter seemed to be a very spirited animal, and as David drew near it suddenly shied and reared so violently that any but a practiced horseman would have been unseated. No catastrophe occurred, however, and a moment afterward the two cavaliers were face to face. No sooner had their eyes met than, as if by a common impulse, they both drew rein, and set staring at each other with a curiosity which merged into astonishment. At length the stranger on the black horse gave a short laugh, and said:

"I perceive that the same strange thing has struck us both, sir. If you won't consider it uncivil, I should like to know who you are. My name is Giovanni Lambert."

"Giovanni Lambert," repeated David, with a slight involuntary movement; "unless I am mistaken, I have heard mention of you. But you are not Italian?"

"Only on my mother's side. But you have the advantage of me."

"You will understand that I could not have heard of you without feeling a strong desire to meet you," said David, dismounting as he spoke. "It is, I think, the only desire left me in the world. I had marked this wood, as I came along, as an inviting place to rest in. Would it suit you to spend an hour here, where we can converse better at our ease than in saddle; or does time press you? As for me, I have little more to do with time."

"I am at your service, sir, with pleasure," returned the other, leaping lightly to the ground, and revealing by the movement a pair of small pistols attached to the belt beneath his blue riding surtout. "It was in my mind, also, to stretch my legs and take a pull at my pipe, for, early as it is, I have ridden far this morning."

At the point where they had halted a green lane branched off into the depths of the wood, and down this they passed, leading their horses. When they were out of sight of the road they made their animals fast in such a way that they could crop the grass, and themselves reclined at

the foot of a broad-limbed oak, and they remained in converse there for upward of an hour.

In fact, it must been several hours later (for the sun was high in the heavens) when one of them issued from the wood. He was mounted on a black horse, and wore a blue surtout and high boots. After looking up and down the road, and assuring himself that no one was in sight, he turned his horse's head toward London, and set off at a round canter. Coming to a cross-road, he turned to the right, and rode for an hour in that direction, crossing the Thames near Hampton Wick. In the afternoon he entered London from the south, and put up at an obscure hostelry. Having seen his horse attended to, and eaten something himself, he went to bed and slept soundly for eighteen hours. On awaking, he ate heartily again, and spent the rest of the day in writing and arranging a quantity of documents that were packed in his saddle-bags. The next morning early he paid his reckoning, rode across London Bridge, and shaped his course toward the west.

Meanwhile the town of Witton was in vast perturbation. When Mr. Harwood Courtney

woke up late in the afternoon, and came yawning down-stairs to get his breakfast, he learned, in answer to his inquiries, that nothing had been seen of David Poindexter since he rode away thirteen hours ago. Mr. Courtney expressed anxiety at this news, and dispatched his own valet and one of David's grooms to make investigations in the neighborhood. These two personages investigated to such good purpose that before night the whole neighborhood was aware that David Poindexter had disappeared. By the next morning it became evident that something had happened to the Wicked Parson, and some people ventured to opine that the thing which had happened to him was that he had run away. And indeed it was astonishing to find to how many worthy people this evil-minded parson was in debt. Every other man you met had a bill against the Reverend David Poindexter in his pocket; and as the day wore on, and still no tidings of the missing man were received, individuals of the sheriff and bailiff species began to be distinguishable amid the crowd. But the great sensation was yet to come. How the report started no one knew, but toward supper-time it passed from

mouth to mouth that Mr. Harwood Courtney, in the course of his twenty-four hours of picquet with Poindexter, had won from the latter not his ready money alone, but the entire property and estates that had accrued to him as nearest of kin to the late David Lambert. And it was added that, as the debt was a gambling transaction, and therefore not technically recoverable by process of law, Mr. Courtney was naturally very anxious for his debtor to put in an appearance. Now it so happened that this report, unlike many others ostensibly more plausible, was true in every particular.

Probably there was more gossip at the supper-tables of Witton that night than in any other town of ten times the size in the United Kingdom; and it was formally agreed that Poindexter had escaped to the Continent, and would either remain in hiding there, or take passage by the first opportunity to the American colonies, or the United States, as they had now been called for some years past. Nobody defended the reverend apostate, but, on the other hand, nobody pretended to be sorry for Mr. Harwood Courtney; it was generally agreed that they had both of them got what they de-

served. The only question was, What was to become of the property? Some people said it ought to belong to Edith Saltine; but of course poetical justice of that kind was not to be expected.

Edith, meanwhile, had kept herself strictly secluded. She was the last person who had seen David Poindexter, but she had mentioned the fact to no one. She was also the only person who did not believe that he had escaped, but who felt convinced that he was dead, and that he had died by his own hand. That gesture of farewell and of despair which he had made to her as he vanished behind the cedar of Lebanon had for her a significance capable of only one interpretation. Were he alive, he would have returned.

On the evening of the day following the events just recorded, the solitude of her room suddenly became terrible to Edith, and she was irresistibly impelled to dress herself and go forth in the open air. She wound a veil about her head, and, avoiding the main thoroughfare, slipped out of the town unperceived, and gained the free country. After a while she found herself approaching a large tree, which spread its branches across a narrow lane that made a short-cut to the

London highway. Beneath the tree was a natural seat, formed of a fragment of stone, and here David and she had often met and sat. It was a mild, still evening; she sat down on the stone, and removed her veil. The moon, then in its first quarter, was low in the west, and shone beneath the branches of the tree.

Presently she was aware—though not by any sound—that some one was approaching, and she drew back in the shadow of the tree. Down the lane came a horseman, mounted on a tall, black horse. The outline of his figure and the manner in which he rode fixed Edith's gaze as if by a spell, and made the blood hum in her ears. Nearer he came, and now his face was discernible in the level moonlight. It was impossible to mistake that countenance: the horseman was David Poindexter. His costume, however, was different from any he had ever before worn; there was nothing clerical about it; nor was that black horse from the Poindexter stables. Then, too, how noiselessly he rode!—as noiselessly as a ghost. That, however, must have been because his horse's hoofs fell on the soft turf. He rode slowly, and his head was bent as if in thought;

but almost before Edith could draw her breath, much less to speak, he had passed beneath the boughs of the tree, and was riding on toward the village. Now he had vanished in the vague light and shadow, and a moment later Edith began to doubt whether her senses had not played her a trick. A superstitious horror fell upon her; what she had seen was a spirit, not living flesh and blood. She knelt down by the stone, and remained for a long time with her face hidden upon her arms, and her hands clasped, sometimes praying, sometimes wondering and fearing. At last she rose to her feet, and hastened homeward through the increasing darkness. But before she had reached her house she had discovered that what she had seen was no ghost. The whole village was in a fever of excitement.

Everybody was full of the story. An hour ago who should appear riding quietly up the village street but David Poindexter himself — at least, if it were not he, it was the devil. He seemed to take little notice of the astonished glances that were thrown at him, or, at any rate, not to understand them. Instead of going to the Lambert mansion, he had alighted at the inn, and

asked the innkeeper whether he might have lodging there. But when the innkeeper, who had known the reverend gentleman as well as he knew his own sign-board, had addressed him by name, the other had shaken his head, seemed perplexed, and had affirmed that his name was not Poindexter but Lambert; and had added, upon further inquiry, that he was the only son of David Lambert, and was come to claim that gentleman's property, to which he was by law entitled; in proof whereof he had produced various documents, among them the certificates of his mother's marriage and of his own birth. As to David Poindexter, he declared that he knew not there was such a person; and although no man in his senses could be made to believe that David Poindexter and this so-called Lambert were twain, and not one and the same individual, the latter stoutly maintained his story, and vowed that the truth would sooner or later appear and confirm him. Meanwhile, however, one of his creditors had had him arrested for a debt of eight hundred pounds; and Harwood Courtney had seen him, and said that he was ready to pledge his salvation that the man was Poindexter and nobody else. So here the

matter rested for the present. But who ever heard of so strange and audacious an attempt at imposition? The man had not even made any effort to disguise himself further than to put on a different suit of clothes and get another horse; and why, in the name of all that was inconceivable, had he come back to Witton, instead of going to any other part of the earth's surface? What could he expect here, except immediate detection, imprisonment, and ruin? Was he insane? He did not seem to be so; but that interpretation of his conduct was not only the most charitable one, but no other could be imagined that would account for the facts.

Witton slept but little that night; but who shall describe its bewilderment when, early in the morning, a constable arrived in the village with the news that the dead body of the Reverend David Poindexter had been found in some woods about fifteen miles off, and that his bay mare had been picked up grazing along the roadside not far from home! Upon the heels of this intelligence came the corpse itself, lying in a country wagon, and the bay mare trotting behind. It was taken out and placed on the table in the inn parlor,

where it immediately became the center of a crowd half crazy with curiosity and amazement. The cause of death was found to be the breaking of the vertebral column just at the base of the neck. There was no other injury on the body, and, allowing for the natural changes incident to death, the face was in every particular the face of David Poindexter. The man who called himself Lambert was now brought into the room, and made to stand beside the corpse, which he regarded with a certain calm interest. The resemblance between the two was minute and astonishing; it was found to be impossible, upon that evidence alone, to decide which was David Poindexter.

The matter was brought to trial as promptly as possible. A great number of witnesses identified the prisoner as David Poindexter, but those who had seen the corpse mostly gave their evidence an opposite inclination; and four persons (one of them the gray-eyed gentleman who has been already mentioned) swore positively that the prisoner was Giovanni Lambert, the gray-eyed gentleman adding that he had once met Poindexter, and had confidently taken him to be Lambert.

An attempt was then made to prove that Lambert had murdered Poindexter; but it entirely failed, there being no evidence that the two men had ever so much as met, and there being no conceivable motive for the murder. Lambert, therefore, was permitted to enter undisturbed upon his inheritance; for he had no difficulty in establishing the fact of the elder Lambert's marriage to an Italian woman twenty-three years before. The marriage had been a secret one, and soon after a violent quarrel had taken place between the wife and husband, and they had separated. The following month Giovanni was born prematurely. He had seen his father but once. The quarrel was never made up, but Lambert sent his wife, from time to time, money enough for her support. She had died about ten years ago, and had given her son the papers to establish his identity, telling him that the day would come to use them. Giovanni had been a soldier, fighting against the French in Spain and elsewhere, and had only heard of his father's death a few weeks ago. He had thereupon come to claim his own, with the singular results that we have seen.

Here was the end of the case, so far as the law

was concerned; but the real end of it is worth noting. Lambert, by his own voluntary act, paid all the legal debts contracted by Poindexter, and gave Courtney, in settlement of the gambling transaction, a sum of fifty thousand pounds. The remainder of his fortune, which was still considerable, he devoted almost entirely to charitable purposes, doing so much genuine good, in a manner so hearty and unassuming, that he became the object of more personal affection than falls to the lot of most philanthropists. He was of a quiet, sad, and retiring disposition, and uniformly very sparing of words. After a year or so, circumstances brought it about that he and Miss Saltine were associated in some benevolent enterprise, and from that time forward they often consulted together in such matters, Lambert making her the medium of many of his benefactions. Of course the gossips were ready to predict that it would end with a marriage; and indeed it was impossible to see the two together (though both of them, and especially Edith, had altered somewhat with the passage of years) without being reminded of the former love affair in which Lambert's double had been the hero. Did this also occur to Edith? It

could hardly have been otherwise, and it would be interesting to speculate on her feelings in the matter; but I have only the story to tell. At all events, they never did marry, though they became very tender friends. At the end of seven years Colonel Saltine died of jaundice; he had been failing in his mind for some time previous, and had always addressed Lambert as Poindexter, and spoken of him as his son-in-law. The year following Lambert himself died, after a brief illness. He left all his property to Edith. She survived to her seventieth year, making it the business of her life to carry out his philanthropic schemes, and she always dressed in widows' weeds. After her death, the following passage was found in one of her private journals. It refers to her last interview with Lambert, on his death-bed:

"....He smiled, and said, 'You will believe, now, that I was sincere in renouncing the ministry, though I have tried to serve the Lord in other ways than from the pulpit.' I felt a shock in my heart, and could hardly say, 'What do you mean, Mr. Lambert?' He replied, 'Surely, Edith, your soul knows, if your reason does not, that I am David Poindexter!' I could not speak. I

hid my face in my hands. After a while, in separate sentences, he told me the truth. When he rode forth on that dreadful morning it was with the purpose to die. But he met on the road this Giovanni Lambert, who so marvelously resembled him, and they sat down together in the wood and talked, and Giovanni told him all the story of his life. . . . As Giovanni was about to mount his horse, which was very restive, he saw a violet in the grass, and stooped to pick it. The horse lashed out with its heels, and struck him in the back of the neck and killed him. . . . Then the idea came to David to exchange clothes with the dead man, and to take his papers, and personate him. Thus, he could escape from the individuality which was his curse, and find his true self, as it were, in another person. He said, too, that his greatest hope had been to win my love and make me his wife; but he found that he could not bring himself to attempt that, unless he confessed his falsehood to me, and he had feared that this confession would turn me from him forever. I wept, and told him that my heart had been his almost from the first, because I always thought of him as David, and that I would have loved him

through all things. He said, 'Then God has been more merciful to me than I deserve; but, doubtless, it is also of His mercy that we have remained unmarried.' But I was in an agony, and could not yet be reconciled. At last he said, 'Will you kiss me, Edith?' and afterward he said, 'My wife!' and that was his last word. But we shall meet again!"

KEN'S MYSTERY.

One cool October evening—it was the last day of the month, and unusually cool for the time of year—I made up my mind to go and spend an hour or two with my friend Keningale. Keningale was an artist (as well as a musical amateur and poet), and had a very delightful studio built onto his house, in which he was wont to sit of an evening. The studio had a cavernous fire-place, designed in imitation of the old-fashioned fire-places of Elizabethan manor-houses, and in it, when the temperature out-doors warranted, he would build up a cheerful fire of dry logs. It would suit me particularly well, I thought, to go and have a quiet pipe and chat in front of that fire with my friend.

I had not had such a chat for a very long time —not, in fact, since Keningale (or Ken, as his

friends called him) had returned from his visit to Europe the year before. He went abroad, as he affirmed at the time, "for purposes of study," whereat we all smiled, for Ken, so far as we knew him, was more likely to do anything else than to study. He was a young fellow of buoyant temperament, lively and social in his habits, of a brilliant and versatile mind, and possessing an income of twelve or fifteen thousand dollars a year; he could sing, play, scribble, and paint very cleverly, and some of his heads and figure-pieces were really well done, considering that he never had any regular training in art; but he was not a worker. Personally he was fine-looking, of good height and figure, active, healthy, and with a remarkably fine brow, and clear, full-gazing eye. Nobody was surprised at his going to Europe, nobody expected him to do anything there except amuse himself, and few anticipated that he would be soon again seen in New York. He was one of the sort that find Europe agree with them. Off he went, therefore; and in the course of a few months the rumor reached us that he was engaged to a handsome and wealthy New York girl whom he had met in London. This was nearly all we did hear

of him until, not very long afterward, he turned up again on Fifth Avenue, to every one's astonishment; made no satisfactory answer to those who wanted to know how he happened to tire so soon of the Old World; while, as to the reported engagement, he cut short all allusion to that in so peremptory a manner as to show that it was not a permissible topic of conversation with him. It was surmised that the lady had jilted him; but, on the other hand, she herself returned home not a great while after, and, though she had plenty of opportunities, she has never married to this day.

Be the rights of that matter what they may, it was soon remarked that Ken was no longer the careless and merry fellow he used to be; on the contrary, he appeared grave, moody, averse from general society, and habitually taciturn and undemonstrative even in the company of his most intimate friends. Evidently something had happened to him, or he had done something. What? Had he committed a murder? or joined the Nihilists? or was his unsuccessful love affair at the bottom of it? Some declared that the cloud was only temporary, and would soon pass away. Nevertheless, up to the period of which I am writing, it had

not passed away, but had rather gathered additional gloom, and threatened to become permanent.

Meanwhile I had met him twice or thrice at the club, at the opera, or in the street, but had as yet had no opportunity of regularly renewing my acquaintance with him. We had been on a footing of more than common intimacy in the old days, and I was not disposed to think that he would refuse to renew the former relations now. But what I had heard and myself seen of his changed condition imparted a stimulating tinge of suspense or curiosity to the pleasure with which I looked forward to the prospects of this evening. His house stood at a distance of two or three miles beyond the general range of habitations in New York at this time, and as I walked briskly along in the clear twilight air I had leisure to go over in my mind all that I had known of Ken and had divined of his character. After all, had there not always been something in his nature—deep down, and held in abeyance by the activity of his animal spirits—but something strange and separate, and capable of developing under suitable conditions into—into what? As I asked myself this ques-

tion I arrived at his door; and it was with a feeling of relief that I felt the next moment the cordial grasp of his hand, and his voice bidding me welcome in a tone that indicated unaffected gratification at my presence. He drew me at once into the studio, relieved me of my hat and cane, and then put his hand on my shoulder.

"I am glad to see you," he repeated, with singular earnestness—"glad to see you and to feel you; and to-night of all nights in the year."

"Why to-night especially?"

"Oh, never mind. It's just as well, too, you didn't let me know beforehand you were coming; the unreadiness is all, to paraphrase the poet. Now, with you to help me, I can drink a glass of whisky and water and take a bit draw of the pipe. This would have been a grim night for me if I'd been left to myself."

"In such a lap of luxury as this, too!" said I, looking round at the glowing fire-place, the low, luxurious chairs, and all the rich and sumptuous fittings of the room. "I should have thought a condemned murderer might make himself comfortable here."

"Perhaps; but that's not exactly my category

at present. But have you forgotten what night this is? This is November-eve, when, as tradition asserts, the dead arise and walk about, and fairies, goblins, and spiritual beings of all kinds have more freedom and power than on any other day of the year. One can see you've never been in Ireland."

"I wasn't aware till now that you had been there, either."

"Yes, I have been in Ireland. Yes—" He paused, sighed, and fell into a reverie, from which, however, he soon roused himself by an effort, and went to a cabinet in a corner of the room for the liquor and tobacco. While he was thus employed I sauntered about the studio, taking note of the various beauties, grotesquenesses, and curiosities that it contained. Many things were there to repay study and arouse admiration; for Ken was a good collector, having excellent taste as well as means to back it. But, upon the whole, nothing interested me more than some studies of a female head, roughly done in oils, and, judging from the sequestered positions in which I found them, not intended by the artist for exhibition or criticism. There were three or four of these studies, all of

the same face, but in different poses and costumes. In one the head was enveloped in a dark hood, overshadowing and partly concealing the features; in another she seemed to be peering duskily through a latticed casement, lit by a faint moonlight; a third showed her splendidly attired in evening costume, with jewels in her hair and ears, and sparkling on her snowy bosom. The expressions were as various as the poses; now it was demure penetration, now a subtle inviting glance, now burning passion, and again a look of elfish and elusive mockery. In whatever phase, the countenance possessed a singular and poignant fascination, not of beauty merely, though that was very striking, but of character and quality likewise.

"Did you find this model abroad?" I inquired at length. "She has evidently inspired you, and I don't wonder at it."

Ken, who had been mixing the punch, and had not noticed my movements, now looked up, and said: "I didn't mean those to be seen. They don't satisfy me, and I am going to destroy them; but I couldn't rest till I'd made some attempts to reproduce— What was it you

asked? Abroad? Yes—or no. They were all painted here within the last six weeks."

"Whether they satisfy you or not, they are by far the best things of yours I have ever seen."

"Well, let them alone, and tell me what you think of this beverage. To my thinking, it goes to the right spot. It owes its existence to your coming here. I can't drink alone, and those portraits are not company, though, for aught I know, she might have come out of the canvas to-night and sat down in that chair." Then, seeing my inquiring look, he added, with a hasty laugh, "It's November-eve, you know, when anything may happen, provided its strange enough. Well, here's to ourselves."

We each swallowed a deep draught of the smoking and aromatic liquor, and set down our glasses with approval. The punch was excellent. Ken now opened a box of cigars, and we seated ourselves before the fire-place.

"All we need now," I remarked, after a short silence, "is a little music. By-the-by, Ken, have you still got the banjo I gave you before you went abroad?"

He paused so long before replying that I sup-

posed he had not heard my question. "I have got it," he said, at length, "but it will never make any more music."

"Got broken, eh? Can't it be mended? It was a fine instrument."

"It's not broken, but it's past mending. You shall see for yourself."

He arose as he spoke, and going to another part of the studio, opened a black oak coffer, and took out of it a long object wrapped up in a piece of faded yellow silk. He handed it to me, and when I had unwrapped it, there appeared a thing that might once have been a banjo, but had little resemblance to one now. It bore every sign of extreme age. The wood of the handle was honeycombed with the gnawings of worms, and dusty with dry-rot. The parchment head was green with mold, and hung in shriveled tatters. The hoop, which was of solid silver, was so blackened and tarnished that it looked like dilapidated iron. The strings were gone, and most of the tuning-screws had dropped out of their decayed sockets. Altogether it had the appearance of having been made before the Flood, and been forgotten in the forecastle of Noah's Ark ever since.

"It is a curious relic, certainly," I said. "Where did you come across it? I had no idea that the banjo was invented so long ago as this. It certainly can't be less than two hundred years old, and may be much older than that."

Ken smiled gloomily. "You are quite right," he said; "it is at least two hundred years old, and yet it is the very same banjo that you gave me a year ago."

"Hardly," I returned, smiling in my turn, "since that was made to my order with a view to presenting it to you."

"I know that; but the two hundred years have passed since then. Yes; it is absurd and impossible, I know, but nothing is truer. That banjo, which was made last year, existed in the sixteenth century, and has been rotting ever since. Stay. Give it to me a moment, and I'll convince you. You recollect that your name and mine, with the date, were engraved on the silver hoop?"

"Yes; and there was a private mark of my own there, also."

"Very well," said Ken, who had been rubbing a place on the hoop with a corner of the yellow silk wrapper; "look at that."

I took the decrepit instrument from him, and examined the spot which he had rubbed. It was incredible, sure enough; but there were the names and the date precisely as I had caused them to be engraved; and there, moreover, was my own private mark, which I had idly made with an old etching point not more than eighteen months before. After convincing myself that there was no mistake, I laid the banjo across my knees, and stared at my friend in bewilderment. He sat smoking with a kind of grim composure, his eyes fixed upon the blazing logs.

"I'm mystified, I confess," said I. "Come; what is the joke? What method have you discovered of producing the decay of centuries on this unfortunate banjo in a few months? And why did you do it? I have heard of an elixir to counteract the effects of time, but your recipe seems to work the other way—to make time rush forward at two hundred times his usual rate, in one place, while he jogs on at his usual gait elsewhere. Unfold your mystery, magician. Seriously, Ken, how on earth did the thing happen?"

"I know no more about it than you do," was his reply. "Either you and I and all the rest of

the living world are insane, or else there has been wrought a miracle as strange as any in tradition. How can I explain it? It is a common saying—a common experience, if you will—that we may, on certain trying or tremendous occasions, live years in one moment. But that's a mental experience, not a physical one, and one that applies, at all events, only to human beings, not to senseless things of wood and metal. You imagine the thing is some trick or jugglery. If it be, I don't know the secret of it. There's no chemical appliance that I ever heard of that will get a piece of solid wood into that condition in a few months, or a few years. And it wasn't done in a few years, or a few months either. A year ago to-day at this very hour that banjo was as sound as when it left the maker's hands, and twenty-four hours afterward—I'm telling you the simple truth—it was as you see it now."

The gravity and earnestness with which Ken made this astounding statement were evidently not assumed. He believed every word that he uttered. I knew not what to think. Of course my friend might be insane, though he betrayed none of the ordinary symptoms of mania; but,

however that might be, there was the banjo, a witness whose silent testimony there was no gainsaying. The more I meditated on the matter the more inconceivable did it appear. Two hundred years —twenty-four hours; these were the terms of the proposed equation. Ken and the banjo both affirmed that the equation had been made; all worldly knowledge and experience affirmed it to be impossible. What was the explanation? What is time? What is life? I felt myself beginning to doubt the reality of all things. And so this was the mystery which my friend had been brooding over since his return from abroad. No wonder it had changed him. More to be wondered at was it that it had not changed him more.

"Can you tell me the whole story?" I demanded at length.

Ken quaffed another draught from his glass of whisky and water and rubbed his hand through his thick brown beard. "I have never spoken to any one of it heretofore," he said, "and I had never meant to speak of it. But I'll try and give you some idea of what it was. You know me better than any one else; you'll understand the thing as far as it can ever be understood, and perhaps I

may be relieved of some of the oppression it has caused me. For it is rather a ghastly memory to grapple with alone, I can tell you."

Hereupon, without further preface, Ken related the following tale. He was, I may observe in passing, a naturally fine narrator. There were deep, lingering tones in his voice, and he could strikingly enhance the comic or pathetic effect of a sentence by dwelling here and there upon some syllable. His features were equally susceptible of humorous and of solemn expressions, and his eyes were in form and hue wonderfully adapted to showing great varieties of emotion. Their mournful aspect was extremely earnest and affecting; and when Ken was giving utterance to some mysterious passage of the tale they had a doubtful, melancholy, exploring look which appealed irresistibly to the imagination. But the interest of his story was too pressing to allow of noticing these incidental embellishments at the time, though they doubtless had their influence upon me all the same.

"I left New York on an Inman Line steamer, you remember," began Ken, "and landed at Havre. I went the usual round of sight-seeing

on the Continent, and got round to London in July, at the height of the season. I had good introductions, and met any number of agreeable and famous people. Among others was a young lady, a countrywoman of my own—you know whom I mean—who interested me very much, and before her family left London she and I were engaged. We parted there for the time, because she had the Continental trip still to make, while I wanted to take the opportunity to visit the north of England and Ireland. I landed at Dublin about the 1st of October, and, zigzagging about the country, I found myself in County Cork about two weeks later.

"There is in that region some of the most lovely scenery that human eyes ever rested on, and it seems to be less known to tourists than many places of infinitely less picturesque value. A lonely region too: during my rambles I met not a single stranger like myself, and few enough natives. It seems incredible that so beautiful a country should be so deserted. After walking a dozen Irish miles you come across a group of two or three one-roomed cottages, and, like as not, one or more of those will have the roof off and the walls

in ruins. The few peasants whom one sees, however, are affable and hospitable, especially when they hear you are from that terrestrial heaven whither most of their friends and relatives have gone before them. They seem simple and primitive enough at first sight, and yet they are as strange and incomprehensible a race as any in the world. They are as superstitious, as credulous of marvels, fairies, magicians, and omens, as the men whom St. Patrick preached to, and at the same time they are shrewd, skeptical, sensible, and bottomless liars. Upon the whole, I met with no nation on my travels whose company I enjoyed so much, or who inspired me with so much kindliness, curiosity, and repugnance.

"At length I got to a place on the sea-coast, which I will not further specify than to say that it is not many miles from Ballymacheen, on the south shore. I have seen Venice and Naples, I have driven along the Cornice Road, I have spent a month at our own Mount Desert, and I say that all of them together are not so beautiful as this glowing, deep-hued, soft-gleaming, silvery-lighted, ancient harbor and town, with the tall hills crowding round it and the black cliffs and headlands

planting their iron feet in the blue, transparent sea. It is a very old place, and has had a history which it has outlived ages since. It may once have had two or three thousand inhabitants; it has scarce five or six hundred to-day. Half the houses are in ruins or have disappeared; many of the remainder are standing empty. All the people are poor, most of them abjectly so; they saunter about with bare feet and uncovered heads, the women in quaint black or dark-blue cloaks, the men in such anomalous attire as only an Irishman knows how to get together, the children half naked. The only comfortable-looking people are the monks and the priests, and the soldiers in the fort. For there is a fort there, constructed on the huge ruins of one which may have done duty in the reign of Edward the Black Prince, or earlier, in whose mossy embrasures are mounted a couple of cannon, which occasionally sent a practice-shot or two at the cliff on the other side of the harbor. The garrison consists of a dozen men and three or four officers and non-commissioned officers. I suppose they are relieved occasionally, but those I saw seemed to have become component parts of their surroundings.

"I put up at a wonderful little old inn, the only one in the place, and took my meals in a dining-saloon fifteen feet by nine, with a portrait of George I (a print varnished to preserve it) hanging over the mantel-piece. On the second evening after dinner a young gentleman came in—the dining-saloon being public property of course—and ordered some bread and cheese and a bottle of Dublin stout. We presently fell into talk; he turned out to be an officer from the fort, Lieutenant O'Connor, and a fine young specimen of the Irish soldier he was. After telling me all he knew about the town, the surrounding country, his friends, and himself, he intimated a readiness to sympathize with whatever tale I might choose to pour into his ear; and I had pleasure in trying to rival his own outspokenness. We became excellent friends; we had up a half-pint of Kinahan's whisky, and the lieutenant expressed himself in terms of high praise of my countrymen, my country, and my own particular cigars. When it became time for him to depart I accompanied him—for there was a splendid moon abroad—and bade him farewell at the fort entrance, having promised to come over the next day and make the

acquaintance of the other fellows. 'And mind your eye, now, going back, my dear boy,' he called out, as I turned my face homeward. 'Faith, 'tis a spooky place, that graveyard, and you'll as likely meet the black woman there as anywhere else!'

"The graveyard was a forlorn and barren spot on the hill-side, just the hither side of the fort: thirty or forty rough head-stones, few of which retained any semblance of the perpendicular, while many were so shattered and decayed as to seem nothing more than irregular natural projections from the ground. Who the black woman might be I knew not, and did not stay to inquire. I had never been subject to ghostly apprehensions, and as a matter of fact, though the path I had to follow was in places very bad going, not to mention a hap-hazard scramble over a ruined bridge that covered a deep-lying brook, I reached my inn without any adventure whatever.

"The next day I kept my appointment at the fort, and found no reason to regret it; and my friendly sentiments were abundantly reciprocated, thanks more especially, perhaps, to the success of my banjo, which I carried with me, and which was as novel as it was popular with those who lis-

tened to it. The chief personages in the social circle besides my friend the lieutenant were Major Molloy, who was in command, a racy and juicy old campaigner, with a face like a sunset, and the surgeon, Dr. Dudeen, a long, dry, humorous genius, with a wealth of anecdotical and traditional lore at his command that I have never seen surpassed. We had a jolly time of it, and it was the precursor of many more like it. The remains of October slipped away rapidly, and I was obliged to remember that I was a traveler in Europe, and not a resident in Ireland. The major, the surgeon, and the lieutenant all protested cordially against my proposed departure, but, as there was no help for it, they arranged a farewell dinner to take place in the fort on All-halloween.

"I wish you could have been at that dinner with me! It was the essence of Irish good-fellowship. Dr. Dudeen was in great force; the major was better than the best of Lever's novels; the lieutenant was overflowing with hearty good-humor, merry chaff, and sentimental rhapsodies anent this or the other pretty girl of the neighborhood. For my part I made the banjo ring as it had never rung before, and the others joined in

the chorus with a mellow strength of lungs such as you don't often hear outside of Ireland. Among the stories that Dr. Dudeen regaled us with was one about the Kern of Querin and his wife, Ethelind Fionguala—which being interpreted signifies 'the white-shouldered.' The lady, it appears, was originally betrothed to one O'Connor (here the lieutanant smacked his lips), but was stolen away on the wedding night by a party of vampires, who, it would seem, were at that period a prominent feature among the troubles of Ireland. But as they were bearing her along—she being unconscious—to that supper where she was not to eat but to be eaten, the young Kern of Querin, who happened to be out duck-shooting, met the party, and emptied his gun at it. The vampires fled, and the Kern carried the fair lady, still in a state of insensibility, to his house. 'And by the same token, Mr. Keningale,' observed the doctor, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, 'ye're after passing that very house on your way here. The one with the dark archway underneath it, and the big mullioned window at the corner, ye recollect, hanging over the street as I might say—'

"'Go 'long wid the house, Dr. Dudeen, dear,'

interrupted the lieutenant; 'sure can't you see we're all dying to know what happened to sweet Miss Fionguala, God be good to her, when I was after getting her safe up-stairs—'

"'Faith, then, I can tell ye that myself, Mr. O'Connor,' exclaimed the major, imparting a rotary motion to the remnants of whisky in his tumbler. ''Tis a question to be solved on general principles, as Colonel O'Halloran said that time he was asked what he'd do if he'd been the Dook o' Wellington, and the Prussians hadn't come up in the nick o' time at Waterloo. 'Faith,' says the colonel, 'I'll tell ye—'

"'Arrah, then, major, why would ye be interruptin' the doctor, and Mr. Keningale there lettin' his glass stay empty till he hears— The Lord save us! the bottle's empty!'

"In the excitement consequent upon this discovery, the thread of the doctor's story was lost; and before it could be recovered the evening had advanced so far that I felt obliged to withdraw. It took some time to make my proposition heard and comprehended; and a still longer time to put it in execution; so that it was fully midnight before I found myself standing in the cool pure air

outside the fort, with the farewells of my boon companions ringing in my ears.

"Considering that it had been rather a wet evening in-doors, I was in a remarkably good state of preservation, and I therefore ascribed it rather to the roughness of the road than to the smoothness of the liquor, when, after advancing a few rods, I stumbled and fell. As I picked myself up I fancied I had heard a laugh, and supposed that the lieutenant, who had accompanied me to the gate, was making merry over my mishap; but on looking round I saw that the gate was closed and no one was visible. The laugh, moreover, had seemed to be close at hand, and to be even pitched in a key that was rather feminine than masculine. Of course I must have been deceived; nobody was near me: my imagination had played me a trick, or else there was more truth than poetry in the tradition that Halloween is the carnival-time of disembodied spirits. It did not occur to me at the time that a stumble is held by the superstitious Irish to be an evil omen, and had I remembered it it would only have been to laugh at it. At all events, I was physically none the worse for my fall, and I resumed my way immediately.

"But the path was singularly difficult to find, or rather the path I was following did not seem to be the right one. I did not recognize it; I could have sworn (except I knew the contrary) that I had never seen it before. The moon had risen, though her light was as yet obscured by clouds, but neither my immediate surroundings nor the general aspect of the region appeared familiar. Dark, silent hill-sides mounted up on either hand, and the road, for the most part, plunged downward, as if to conduct me into the bowels of the earth. The place was alive with strange echoes, so that at times I seemed to be walking through the midst of muttering voices and mysterious whispers, and a wild, faint sound of laughter seemed ever and anon to reverberate among the passes of the hills. Currents of colder air sighing up through narrow defiles and dark crevices touched my face as with airy fingers. A certain feeling of anxiety and insecurity began to take possession of me, though there was no definable cause for it, unless that I might be belated in getting home. With the perverse instinct of those who are lost I hastened my steps, but was impelled now and then to glance back over my

shoulder, with a sensation of being pursued. But no living creature was in sight. The moon, however, had now risen higher, and the clouds that were drifting slowly across the sky flung into the naked valley dusky shadows, which occasionally assumed shapes that looked like the vague semblance of gigantic human forms.

"How long I had been hurrying onward I know not, when, with a kind of suddenness, I found myself approaching a graveyard. It was situated on the spur of a hill, and there was no fence around it, nor anything to protect it from the incursions of passers-by. There was something in the general appearance of this spot that made me half fancy I had seen it before; and I should have taken it to be the same that I had often noticed on my way to the fort, but that the latter was only a few hundred yards distant therefrom, whereas I must have traversed several miles at least. As I drew near, moreover, I observed that the head-stones did not appear so ancient and decayed as those of the other. But what chiefly attracted my attention was the figure that was leaning or half sitting upon one of the largest of the upright slabs near the road. It was a female fig-

ure draped in black, and a closer inspection—for I was soon within a few yards of her—showed that she wore the calla, or long hooded cloak, the most common as well as the most ancient garment of Irish women, and doubtless of Spanish origin.

"I was a trifle startled by this apparition, so unexpected as it was, and so strange did it seem that any human creature should be at that hour of the night in so desolate and sinister a place. Involuntarily I paused as I came opposite her, and gazed at her intently. But the moonlight fell behind her, and the deep hood of her cloak so completely shadowed her face that I was unable to discern anything but the sparkle of a pair of eyes, which appeared to be returning my gaze with much vivacity.

"'You seem to be at home here,' I said, at length. 'Can you tell me where I am?'

"Hereupon the mysterious personage broke into a light laugh, which, though in itself musical and agreeable, was of a timbre and intonation that caused my heart to beat rather faster than my late pedestrian exertions warranted; for it was the identical laugh (or so my imagination persuaded

me) that had echoed in my ears as I arose from my tumble an hour or two ago. For the rest, it was the laugh of a young woman, and presumably of a pretty one; and yet it had a wild, airy, mocking quality, that seemed hardly human at all, or not, at any rate, characteristic of a being of affections and limitations like unto ours. But this impression of mine was fostered, no doubt, by the unusual and uncanny circumstances of the occasion.

"'Sure, sir,' said she, 'you're at the grave of Ethelind Fionguala.'

"As she spoke she rose to her feet, and pointed to the inscription on the stone. I bent forward, and was able, without much difficulty, to decipher the name, and a date which indicated that the occupant of the grave must have entered the disembodied state between two and three centuries ago.

"'And who are you?' was my next question.

"'I'm called Elsie,' she replied. 'But where would your honor be going November-eve?'

"I mentioned my destination, and asked her whether she could direct me thither.

"'Indeed, then, 'tis there I'm going myself,' Elsie replied; 'and if your honor 'll follow me,

and play me a tune on the pretty instrument, 'tisn't long we'll be on the road.'

"She pointed to the banjo which I carried wrapped up under my arm. How she knew that it was a musical instrument I could not imagine; possibly, I thought, she may have seen me playing on it as I strolled about the environs of the town. Be that as it may, I offered no opposition to the bargain, and further intimated that I would reward her more substantially on our arrival. At that she laughed again, and made a peculiar gesture with her hand above her head. I uncovered my banjo, swept my fingers across the strings, and struck into a fantastic dance-measure, to the music of which we proceeded along the path, Elsie slightly in advance, her feet keeping time to the airy measure. In fact, she trod so lightly, with an elastic, undulating movement, that with a little more it seemed as if she might float onward like a spirit. The extreme whiteness of her feet attracted my eye, and I was surprised to find that instead of being bare, as I had supposed, these were incased in white satin slippers quaintly embroidered with gold thread.

"'Elsie,' said I, lengthening my steps so as to

come up with her, 'where do you live, and what do you do for a living?'

"'Sure, I live by myself,' she answered; 'and if you'd be after knowing how, you must come and see for yourself.'

"'Are you in the habit of walking over the hills at night in shoes like that?'

"'And why would I not?' she asked, in her turn. 'And where did your honor get the pretty gold ring on your finger?'

"The ring, which was of no great intrinsic value, had struck my eye in an old curiosity-shop in Cork. It was an antique of very old-fashioned design, and might have belonged (as the vender assured me was the case) to one of the early kings or queens of Ireland.

"'Do you like it?' said I.

"'Will your honor be after making a present of it to Elsie?' she returned, with an insinuating tone and turn of the head.

"'Maybe I will, Elsie, on one condition. I am an artist; I make pictures of people. If you will promise to come to my studio and let me paint your portrait, I'll give you the ring, and some money besides.'

"'And will you give me the ring now?' said Elsie.

"'Yes, if you'll promise.'

"'And will you play the music to me?' she continued.

"'As much as you like.'

"'But maybe I'll not be handsome enough for ye,' said she, with a glance of her eyes beneath the dark hood.

"'I'll take the risk of that,' I answered, laughing, 'though, all the same, I don't mind taking a peep beforehand to remember you by.' So saying, I put forth a hand to draw back the concealing hood. But Elsie eluded me, I scarce know how, and laughed a third time, with the same airy, mocking cadence.

"'Give me the ring first, and then you shall see me,' she said, coaxingly.

"'Stretch out your hand, then,' returned I, removing the ring from my finger. 'When we are better acquainted, Elsie, you won't be so suspicious.'

"She held out a slender, delicate hand, on the forefinger of which I slipped the ring. As I did so, the folds of her cloak fell a little apart, afford-

ing me a glimpse of a white shoulder and of a dress that seemed in that deceptive semi-darkness to be wrought of rich and costly material; and I caught, too, or so I fancied, the frosty sparkle of precious stones.

"'Arrah, mind where ye tread!' said Elsie, in a sudden, sharp tone.

"I looked round, and became aware for the first time that we were standing near the middle of a ruined bridge which spanned a rapid stream that flowed at a considerable depth below. The parapet of the bridge on one side was broken down, and I must have been, in fact, in imminent danger of stepping over into empty air. I made my way cautiously across the decaying structure; but, when I turned to assist Elsie, she was nowhere to be seen.

"What had become of the girl? I called, but no answer came. I gazed about on every side, but no trace of her was visible. Unless she had plunged into the narrow abyss at my feet, there was no place where she could have concealed herself—none at least that I could discover. She had vanished, nevertheless; and since her disappearance must have been premeditated, I finally

came to the conclusion that it was useless to attempt to find her. She would present herself again in her own good time, or not at all. She had given me the slip very cleverly, and I must make the best of it. The adventure was perhaps worth the ring.

"On resuming my way, I was not a little relieved to find that I once more knew where I was. The bridge that I had just crossed was none other than the one I mentioned some time back; I was within a mile of the town, and my way lay clear before me. The moon, moreover, had now quite dispersed the clouds, and shone down with exquisite brilliance. Whatever her other failings, Elsie had been a trustworthy guide; she had brought me out of the depth of elf-land into the material world again. It had been a singular adventure, certainly; and I mused over it with a sense of mysterious pleasure as I sauntered along, humming snatches of airs, and accompanying myself on the strings. Hark! what light step was that behind me? It sounded like Elsie's; but no, Elsie was not there. The same impression or hallucination, however, recurred several times before I reached the outskirts of the town—the tread of an

airy foot behind or beside my own. The fancy did not make me nervous; on the contrary, I was pleased with the notion of being thus haunted, and gave myself up to a romantic and genial vein of reverie.

"After passing one or two roofless and moss-grown cottages, I entered the narrow and rambling street which leads through the town. This street a short distance down widens a little, as if to afford the wayfarer space to observe a remarkable old house that stands on the northern side. The house was built of stone, and in a noble style of architecture; it reminded me somewhat of certain palaces of the old Italian nobility that I had seen on the Continent, and it may very probably have been built by one of the Italian or Spanish immigrants of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The molding of the projecting windows and arched doorway was richly carved, and upon the front of the building was an escutcheon wrought in high relief, though I could not make out the purport of the device. The moonlight falling upon this picturesque pile enhanced all its beauties, and at the same time made it seem like a vision that might dissolve away when

the light ceased to shine. I must often have seen the house before, and yet I retained no definite recollection of it; I had never until now examined it with my eyes open, so to speak. Leaning against the wall on the opposite side of the street, I contemplated it for a long while at my leisure. The window at the corner was really a very fine and massive affair. It projected over the pavement below, throwing a heavy shadow aslant; the frames of the diamond-paned lattices were heavily mullioned. How often in past ages had that lattice been pushed open by some fair hand, revealing to a lover waiting beneath in the moonlight the charming countenance of his high-born mistress! Those were brave days. They had passed away long since. The great house had stood empty for who could tell how many years; only bats and vermin were its inhabitants. Where now were those who had built it? and who were they? Probably the very name of them was forgotten.

"As I continued to stare upward, however, a conjecture presented itself to my mind which rapidly ripened into a conviction. Was not this the house that Dr. Dudeen had described that very

evening as having been formerly the abode of the Kern of Querin and his mysterious bride? There was the projecting window, the arched doorway. Yes, beyond a doubt this was the very house. I emitted a low exclamation of renewed interest and pleasure, and my speculations took a still more imaginative, but also a more definite turn.

"What had been the fate of that lovely lady after the Kern had brought her home insensible in his arms? Did she recover, and were they married and made happy ever after; or had the sequel been a tragic one? I remembered to have read that the victims of vampires generally became vampires themselves. Then my thoughts went back to that grave on the hill-side. Surely that was unconsecrated ground. Why had they buried her there? Ethelind of the white shoulder! Ah! why had not I lived in those days; or why might not some magic cause them to live again for me? Then would I seek this street at midnight, and standing here beneath her window, I would lightly touch the strings of my bandore until the casement opened cautiously and she looked down. A sweet vision indeed! And

what prevented my realizing it? Only a matter of a couple of centuries or so. And was time, then, at which poets and philosophers sneer, so rigid and real a matter that a little faith and imagination might not overcome it? At all events, I had my banjo, the bandore's legitimate and lineal descendant, and the memory of Fionguala should have the love-ditty.

"Hereupon, having retuned the instrument, I launched forth into an old Spanish love-song, which I had met with in some moldy library during my travels, and had set to music of my own. I sang low, for the deserted street reechoed the lightest sound, and what I sang must reach only my lady's ears. The words were warm with the fire of the ancient Spanish chivalry, and I threw into their expression all the passion of the lovers of romance. Surely Fionguala, the white-shouldered, would hear, and awaken from her sleep of centuries, and come to the latticed casement and look down! Hist! see yonder! What light—what shadow is that that seems to flit from room to room within the abandoned house, and now approaches the mullioned window? Are my eyes dazzled by the play of the

moonlight, or does the casement move—does it open? Nay, this is no delusion; there is no error of the senses here. There is simply a woman, young, beautiful, and richly attired, bending forward from the window, and silently beckoning me to approach.

"Too much amazed to be conscious of amazement, I advanced until I stood directly beneath the casement, and the lady's face, as she stooped toward me, was not more than twice a man's height from my own. She smiled and kissed her finger-tips; something white fluttered in her hand, then fell through the air to the ground at my feet. The next moment she had withdrawn, and I heard the lattice close.

"I picked up what she had let fall; it was a delicate lace handkerchief, tied to the handle of an elaborately wrought bronze key. It was evidently the key of the house, and invited me to enter. I loosened it from the handkerchief, which bore a faint, delicious perfume, like the aroma of flowers in an ancient garden, and turned to the arched doorway. I felt no misgiving, and scarcely any sense of strangeness. All was as I had wished it to be, and as it should be; the mediæval age was alive

once more, and as for myself, I almost felt the velvet cloak hanging from my shoulder and the long rapier dangling at my belt. Standing in front of the door I thrust the key into the lock, turned it, and felt the bolt yield. The next instant the door was opened, apparently from within; I stepped across the threshold, the door closed again, and I was alone in the house, and in darkness.

"Not alone, however! As I extended my hand to grope my way it was met by another hand, soft, slender, and cold, which insinuated itself gently into mine and drew me forward. Forward I went, nothing loath; the darkness was impenetrable, but I could hear the light rustle of a dress close to me, and the same delicious perfume that had emanated from the handkerchief enriched the air that I breathed, while the little hand that clasped and was clasped by my own alternately tightened and half relaxed the hold of its soft cold fingers. In this manner, and treading lightly, we traversed what I presumed to be a long, irregular passageway, and ascended a staircase. Then another corridor, until finally we paused, a door opened, emitting a flood of soft

light, into which we entered, still hand in hand. The darkness and the doubt were at an end.

"The room was of imposing dimensions, and was furnished and decorated in a style of antique splendor. The walls were draped with mellow hues of tapestry; clusters of candles burned in polished silver sconces, and were reflected and multiplied in tall mirrors placed in the four corners of the room. The heavy beams of the dark oaken ceiling crossed each other in squares, and were laboriously carved; the curtains and the drapery of the chairs were of heavy-figured damask. At one end of the room was a broad ottoman, and in front of it a table, on which was set forth, in massive silver dishes, a sumptuous repast, with wines in crystal beakers. At the side was a vast and deep fire-place, with space enough on the broad hearth to burn whole trunks of trees. No fire, however, was there, but only a great heap of dead embers; and the room, for all its magnificence, was cold—cold as a tomb, or as my lady's hand—and it sent a subtle chill creeping to my heart.

"But my lady! how fair she was! I gave but a passing glance at the room; my eyes and my

thoughts were all for her. She was dressed in white, like a bride; diamonds sparkled in her dark hair and on her snowy bosom; her lovely face and slender lips were pale, and all the paler for the dusky glow of her eyes. She gazed at me with a strange, elusive smile; and yet there was, in her aspect and bearing, something familiar in the midst of strangeness, like the burden of a song heard long ago and recalled among other conditions and surroundings. It seemed to me that something in me recognized her and knew her, had known her always. She was the woman of whom I had dreamed, whom I had beheld in visions, whose voice and face had haunted me from boyhood up. Whether we had ever met before, as human beings meet, I knew not; perhaps I had been blindly seeking her all over the world, and she had been awaiting me in this splendid room, sitting by those dead embers until all the warmth had gone out of her blood, only to be restored by the heat with which my love might supply her.

"'I thought you had forgotten me,' she said, nodding as if in answer to my thought. 'The night was so late—our one night of the year!

How my heart rejoiced when I heard your dear voice singing the song I know so well! Kiss me —my lips are cold!'

"Cold indeed they were—cold as the lips of death. But the warmth of my own seemed to revive them. They were now tinged with a faint color, and in her cheeks also appeared a delicate shade of pink. She drew fuller breath, as one who recovers from a long lethargy. Was it my life that was feeding her? I was ready to give her all. She drew me to the table and pointed to the viands and the wine.

"'Eat and drink,' she said. 'You have traveled far, and you need food.'

"'Will you eat and drink with me?' said I, pouring out the wine.

"'You are the only nourishment I want,' was her answer. 'This wine is thin and cold. Give me wine as red as your blood and as warm, and I will drain a goblet to the dregs.'

"At these words, I know not why, a slight shiver passed through me. She seemed to gain vitality and strength at every instant, but the chill of the great room struck into me more and more.

"She broke into a fantastic flow of spirits, clapping her hands, and dancing about me like a child. Who was she? And was I myself, or was she mocking me when she implied that we had belonged to each other of old? At length she stood still before me, crossing her hands over her breast. I saw upon the forefinger of her right hand the gleam of an antique ring.

"'Where did you get that ring?' I demanded.

"She shook her head and laughed. 'Have you been faithful?' she asked. 'It is my ring; it is the ring that unites us; it is the ring you gave me when you loved me first. It is the ring of the Kern—the fairy ring, and I am your Ethelind—Ethelind Fionguala.'

"'So be it,' I said, casting aside all doubt and fear, and yielding myself wholly to the spell of her inscrutable eyes and wooing lips. 'You are mine, and I am yours, and let us be happy while the hours last.'

"'You are mine, and I am yours,' she repeated, nodding her head with an elfish smile. 'Come and sit beside me, and sing that sweet song again that you sang to me so long ago. Ah, now I shall live a hundred years.'

"We seated ourselves on the ottoman, and while she nestled luxuriously among the cushions, I took my banjo and sang to her. The song and the music resounded through the lofty room, and came back in throbbing echoes. And before me as I sang I saw the face and form of Ethelind Fionguala, in her jeweled bridal dress, gazing at me with burning eyes. She was pale no longer, but ruddy and warm, and life was like a flame within her. It was I who had become cold and bloodless, yet with the last life that was in me I would have sung to her of love that can never die. But at length my eyes grew dim, the room seemed to darken, the form of Ethelind alternately brightened and waxed indistinct, like the last flickerings of a fire; I swayed toward her, and felt myself lapsing into unconsciousness, with my head resting on her white shoulder."

Here Keningale paused a few moments in his story, flung a fresh log upon the fire, and then continued:

"I awoke, I know not how long afterward. I was in a vast, empty room in a ruined building. Rotten shreds of drapery depended from the walls, and heavy festoons of spiders' webs gray

with dust covered the windows, which were destitute of glass or sash; they had been boarded up with rough planks which had themselves become rotten with age, and admitted through their holes and crevices pallid rays of light and chilly draughts of air. A bat, disturbed by these rays or by my own movement, detached himself from his hold on a remnant of moldy tapestry near me, and after circling dizzily around my head, wheeled the flickering noiselessness of his flight into a darker corner. As I arose unsteadily from the heap of miscellaneous rubbish on which I had been lying, something which had been resting across my knees fell to the floor with a rattle. I picked it up, and found it to be my banjo—as you see it now.

"Well, that is all I have to tell. My health was seriously impaired; all the blood seemed to have been drawn out of my veins; I was pale and haggard, and the chill— Ah, that chill," murmured Keningale, drawing nearer to the fire, and spreading out his hands to catch the warmth—"I shall never get over it; I shall carry it to my grave."

"WHEN HALF-GODS GO, THE GODS ARRIVE."

"WHAT a beautiful girl!" said Mr. Ambrose Drayton to himself; "and how much she looks like—" He cut the comparison short, and turned his eyes seaward, pulling at his mustache meditatively the while.

"This American atmosphere, fresh and pure as it is in the nostrils, is heavy-laden with reminiscences," his thoughts ran on. "Reminiscences, but always with differences, the chief difference being, no doubt, in myself. And no wonder. Nineteen years; yes, it's positively nineteen years since I stood here and gazed out through yonder gap between the headlands. Nineteen years of foreign lands, foreign men and manners, the courts, the camps, the schools; adventure, busi-

ness, and pleasure — if I may lightly use so mysterious a word. Nineteen and twenty are thirty-nine; in my case say sixty at least. Why, a girl like that lovely young thing walking away there with her light step and her innocent heart would take me to be sixty to a dead certainty. A rather well-preserved man of sixty—that's how she'd describe me to the young fellow she's given her heart to. Well, sixty or forty, what difference? When a man has passed the age at which he falls in love, he is the peer of Methuselah from that time forth. But what a fiery season that of love is while it lasts! Ay, and it burns something out of the soul that never grows again. And well that it should do so: a susceptible heart is a troublesome burden to lug round the world. Curious that I should be even thinking of such things: association, I suppose. Here it was that we met and here we parted. But what a different place it was then! A lovely cape, half bleak moorland and half shaggy wood, a few rocky headlands and a great many coots and gulls, and one solitary old farmhouse standing just where that spick-and-span summer hotel, with its balconies and cupolas, stands now. So it was

nineteen years ago, and so it may be again, perhaps, nine hundred years hence; but meanwhile, what a pretty array of modern æsthetic cottages, and plank walks, and bridges, and bathing-houses, and pleasure-boats! And what an admirable concourse of well-dressed and pleasurably inclined men and women! After all, my countrymen are the finest-looking and most prosperous-appearing people on the globe. They have traveled a little faster than I have, and on a somewhat different track; but I would rather be among them than anywhere else. Yes, I won't go back to London, nor yet to Paris, or Calcutta, or Cairo. I'll buy a cottage here at Squittig Point, and live and die here and in New York. I wonder whether Mary is alive and mother of a dozen children, or—not!"

"Auntie," said Miss Leithe to her relative, as they regained the veranda of their cottage after their morning stroll on the beach, "who was that gentleman who looked at us?"

"Hey?—who?" inquired the widow of the late Mr. Corwin, absently.

"The one in the thin gray suit and Panama

hat; you must have seen him. A very distinguished-looking man, and yet very simple and pleasant; like some of those nice middle-aged men that you see in "Punch," slenderly built, with handsome chin and eyes, and thick mustache and whiskers. Oh, auntie, why do you never notice things? I think a man between forty and fifty is ever so much nicer than when they're younger. They know how to be courteous, and they're not afraid of being natural. I mean this one looks as if he would. But he must be somebody remarkable in some way—don't you think so? There's something about him—something graceful and gentle and refined and manly—that makes most other men seem common beside him. Who do you suppose he can be?"

"Who?—what have you been saying, my dear?" inquired Aunt Corwin, rousing herself from the perusal of a letter. "Here's Sarah writes that Frank Redmond was to sail from Havre the 20th; so he won't be here for a week or ten days yet."

"Well, he might not have come at all," said the girl, coloring slightly. "I'm sure I didn't think he would, when he went away."

"You are both of you a year older and wiser," said the widow, meditatively; "and you have learned, I hope, not to irritate a man needlessly. I never irritated Corwin in all my life. They don't understand it."

"Here comes Mr. Haymaker," observed Miss Leithe. "I shall ask him."

"Don't ask him in," said Mrs. Corwin, retiring; "he chatters like an organ-grinder."

"Oh, good-morning, Miss Mary!" exclaimed Mr. Haymaker, as he mounted the steps of the veranda, with his hands extended and his customary effusion. "How charming you are looking after your bath and your walk and all! Did you ever see such a charming morning? I never was at a place I liked so much as Squittig Point; the new Newport, I call it—eh? the new Newport. So fashionable already, and only been going, as one might say, three or four years! Such charming people here! Oh, by-the-way, whom do you think I ran across just now? You wouldn't know him, though—been abroad since before you were born, I should think. Most charming man I ever met, and awfully wealthy. Ran across him in Europe—Paris, I think it was—stop! or was it

Vienna? Well, never mind. Drayton, that's his name; ever hear of him? Ambrose Drayton. Made a great fortune in the tea-trade; or was it in the mines? I've forgotten. Well, no matter. Great traveler, too—Africa and the Corea, and all that sort of thing; and fought under Garibaldi, they say; and he had the charge of some diplomatic affair at Pekin once. The quietest, most gentlemanly fellow you ever saw. Oh, you must meet him. He's come back to stay, and will probably spend the summer here. I'll get him and introduce him. Oh, he'll be charmed—we all shall."

"What sort of a looking person is he?" Miss Leithe inquired.

"Oh, charming—just right! Trifle above medium height; rather lighter weight than I am, but graceful; grayish hair, heavy mustache, blue eyes; style of a retired English colonel, rather. You know what I mean—trifle reticent, but charming manners. Stop! there he goes now—see him? Just stopping to light a cigar—in a line with the light-house. Now he's thrown away the match, and walking on again. That's Ambrose Drayton. Introduce him on the sands this

afternoon. How is your good aunt to-day? So sorry not to have seen her! Well, I must be off; awfully busy to-day. Good-by, my dear Miss Mary; see you this afternoon. Good-by. Oh, make my compliments to your good aunt, won't you? Thanks. So charmed! *Au revoir.*"

"Has that fool gone?" demanded a voice from within.

"Yes, Auntie," the young lady answered.

"Then come in to your dinner," the voice rejoined, accompanied by the sound of a chair being drawn up to a table and sat down upon. Mary Leithe, after casting a glance after the retreating figure of Mr. Haymaker and another toward the light-house, passed slowly through the wire-net doors and disappeared.

Mr. Drayton had perforce engaged his accommodations at the hotel, all the cottages being either private property or rented, and was likewise constrained, therefore, to eat his dinner in public. But Mr. Drayton was not a hater of his species, nor a fearer of it; and though he had not acquired precisely our American habits and customs, he was disposed to be as little strange to

them as possible. Accordingly, when the gong sounded, he entered the large dining-room with great intrepidity. The arrangement of tables was not continuous, but many small tables, capable of accommodating from two to six, were dotted about everywhere. Mr. Drayton established himself at the smallest of them, situated in a part of the room whence he had a view not only of the room itself, but of the blue sea and yellow rocks on the other side. This preliminary feat of generalship accomplished, he took a folded dollar bill from his pocket and silently held it up in the air, the result being the speedy capture of a waiter and the introduction of dinner.

But at this juncture Mr. Haymaker came pitching into the room, as his nature was, and pinned himself to a standstill, as it were, with his eyeglass, in the central aisle of tables. Drayton at once gave himself up for lost, and therefore received Mr. Haymaker with kindness and serenity when, a minute or two later, he came plunging up, in his usual ecstasy of sputtering amiability, and seated himself in the chair at the other side of the table with an air as if everything were charming in the most charming of all possible

worlds, and he himself the most charming person in it.

"My dear Drayton, though," exclaimed Mr. Haymaker, in the interval between the soup and the bluefish, "there is some one here you must know—most charming girl you ever knew in your life, and has set her heart on knowing you. We were talking about you this morning—Miss Mary Leithe. Lovely name, too; pity ever to change it —he! he! he! Why, you must have seen her about here; has an old aunt, widow of Jim Corwin, who's dead and gone these five years. You recognize her, of course?"

"Not as you describe her," said Mr. Drayton, helping his friend to fish.

"Oh, the handsomest girl about here; tallish, wavy brown hair, soft brown eyes, the loveliest-shaped eyes in the world, my dear fellow; complexion like a Titian, figure slender yet, but promising. A way of giving you her hand that makes you wish she would take your heart," pursued Mr. Haymaker, impetuously filling his mouth with bluefish, during the disposal of which he lost the thread of his harangue. Drayton, however, seemed disposed to recover it for him.

"Is this young lady from New England?" he inquired.

"New-Yorker by birth," responded the ever-vivacious Haymaker; "father a Southern man; mother a Bostonian. Father died eight or nine years after marriage; mother survived him six years; girl left in care of old Mrs. Corwin—good old creature, but vague — very vague. Don't fancy the marriage was a very fortunate one; a little friction, more or less. Leithe was rather a wild, unreliable sort of man; Mrs. Leithe a woman not easily influenced—immensely charming, though, and all that, but a trifle narrow and set. Well, you know, it was this way: Leithe was an immensely wealthy man when she married him; lost his money, struggled along, good deal of friction; Mrs. Leithe probably felt she had made a mistake, and that sort of thing. But Miss Mary here, very different style, looks like her mother, but softer; more in her, too. Very little money, poor girl, but charming. Oh! you must know her."

"What did you say her mother's maiden name was?"

"Maiden name? Let me see. Why—oh, no—oh, yes—Cleveland, Mary Cleveland."

"Mary Cleveland, of Boston; married Hamilton Leithe, about nineteen years ago. I used to know the lady. And this is her daughter! And Mary Cleveland is dead!—Help yourself, Haymaker. I never take more than one course at this hour of the day."

"But you must let me introduce you, you know," mumbled Haymaker, through his succotash.

"I hardly know," said Drayton, rubbing his mustache. "Pardon me if I leave you," he added, looking at his watch. "It is later than I thought."

Nothing more was seen of Drayton for the rest of that day. But the next morning, as Mary Leithe sat on the Bowlder Rock, with a book on her lap, and her eyes on the bathers, and her thoughts elsewhere, she heard a light, leisurely tread behind her, and a gentlemanly, effective figure made its appearance, carrying a malacca walking-stick, and a small telescope in a leather case slung over the shoulder.

"Good-morning, Miss Leithe," said this personage, in a quiet and pleasant voice. "I knew your mother before you were born, and I can not

feel like a stranger toward her daughter. My name is Ambrose Drayton. You look something like your mother, I think."

"I think I remember mamma's having spoken of you," said Mary Leithe, looking up a little shyly, but with a smile that was the most winning of her many winning manifestations. Her upper lip, short, but somewhat fuller than the lower one, was always alive with delicate movements; the corners of her mouth were blunt, the teeth small; and the smile was such as Psyche's might have been when Cupid waked her with a kiss.

"It was here I first met your mother," continued Drayton, taking his place beside her. "We often sat together on this very rock. I was a young fellow then, scarcely older than you, and very full of romance and enthusiasm. Your mother—" He paused a moment, looking at his companion with a grave smile in his eyes. "If I had been as dear to her as she was to me," he went on, "you would have been our daughter."

Mary looked out upon the bathers, and upon the azure bay, and into her own virgin heart. "Are you married, too?" she asked at length.

"I was cut out for an old bachelor, and I have

been true to my destiny," was his reply. "Besides, I've lived abroad till a month or two ago, and good Americans don't marry foreign wives."

"I should like to go abroad," said Mary Leithe.

"It is the privilege of Americans," said Drayton. "Other people are born abroad, and never know the delight of real travel. But, after all, America is best. The life of the world culminates here. We are the prow of the vessel; there may be more comfort amidships, but we are the first to touch the unknown seas. And the foremost men of all nations are foremost only in so far as they are at heart American; that is to say, America is, at present, even more an idea and a principle than it is a country. The nation has perhaps not yet risen to the height of its opportunities. So you have never crossed the Atlantic?"

"No; my father never wanted to go; and after he died, mamma could not."

"Well, our American Emerson says, you know, that, as the good of travel respects only the mind, we need not depend for it on railways and steamboats."

"It seems to me, if we never moved ourselves, our minds would never really move either."

"Where would you most care to go?"

"To Rome, and Jerusalem, and Egypt, and London."

"Why?"

"They seem like parts of my mind that I shall never know unless I visit them."

"Is there no part of the world that answers to your heart?"

"Oh, the beautiful parts everywhere, I suppose."

"I can well believe it," said Drayton, but with so much simplicity and straightforwardness that Mary Leithe's cheeks scarcely changed color. "And there is beauty enough here," he added, after a pause.

"Yes; I have always liked this place," said she, "though the cottages seem a pity."

"You knew the old farm-house, then?"

"Oh, yes; I used to play in the farm-yard when I was a little girl. After my father died, mamma used to come here every year. And my aunt has a cottage here now. You haven't met my aunt, Mr. Drayton?"

"I wished to know you first. But now I want to know her, and to become one of the family. There is no one left, I find, who belongs to me. What would you think of me for a bachelor uncle?"

"I would like it very much," said Mary, with a smile.

"Then let us begin," returned Drayton.

Several days passed away very pleasantly. Never was there a bachelor uncle so charming, as Haymaker would have said, as Drayton. The kind of life in the midst of which he found himself was altogether novel and delightful to him. In some aspects it was like enjoying for the first time a part of his existence which he should have enjoyed in youth, but had missed; and in many ways he doubtless enjoyed it more now than he would have done then, for he brought it to a maturity of experience which had taught him the inestimable value of simple things; a quiet nobility of character and clearness of knowledge that enabled him to perceive and follow the right course in small things as in great; a serene yet cordial temperament that rendered him the cheer-

fulest and most trustworthy of companions; a generous and masculine disposition, as able to direct as to comply; and years which could sympathize impartially with youth and age, and supply something which each lacked. He, meanwhile, sometimes seemed to himself to be walking in a dream. The region in which he was living, changed, yet so familiar, the thought of being once more, after so many years of homeless wandering, in his own land and among his own countrymen, and the companionship of Mary Leithe, like, yet so unlike, the Mary Cleveland he had known and loved, possessing in reality all the tenderness and lovely virginal sweetness that he had imagined in the other, with a warmth of heart that rejuvenated his own, and a depth and freshness of mind answering to the wisdom that he had drawn from experience, and rendering her, though in her different and feminine sphere, his equal—all these things made Drayton feel as if he would either awake and find them the phantasmagoria of a beautiful dream, or as if the past time were the dream, and this the reality. Certainly, in this ardent, penetrating light of the present, the past looked vaporous and dim, like a

range of mountains scaled long ago and vanishing on the horizon.

And was this all? Doubtless it was, at first. It was natural that Drayton should regard with peculiar tenderness the daughter of the woman he had loved. She was an orphan, and poor; he was alone in the world, with no one dependent upon him, and with wealth which could find no better use than to afford this girl the opportunities and the enjoyments which she else must lack. His anticipations in returning to America had been somewhat cold and vague. It was his native land; but abstract patriotism is, after all, rather chilly diet for a human being to feed his heart upon. The unexpected apparition of Mary Leithe had provided just that vividness and particularity that were wanting. Insensibly Drayton bestowed upon her all the essence of the love of country which he had cherished untainted throughout his long exile. It was so much easier and simpler a thing to know and appreciate her than to do as much for the United States and their fifty million inhabitants, national, political, and social, that it is no wonder if Drayton, as a modest and sane gentleman, preferred to make the former the symbol

of the latter—of all, at least, that was good and lovable therein. At the same time, so clear-headed a man could scarcely have failed to be aware that his affection for Mary Leithe was not actually dependent upon the fact of her being an emblem. Upon what, then, was it dependent? Upon her being the daughter of Mary Cleveland? It was true that he had loved Mary Cleveland; but she had deliberately jilted him to marry a wealthier man, and was therefore connected with and responsible for the most painful as well as the most pleasurable episode of his early life. Mary Leithe bore some personal resemblance to her mother; but had she been as like her in character and disposition as she was in figure and feature, would Drayton, knowing what he knew, have felt drawn toward her? A man does not remain for twenty years under the influence of an unreasonable and mistaken passion. Drayton certainly had not, although his disappointment had kept him a bachelor all his life, and altered the whole course of his existence. But when we have once embarked upon a certain career, we continue in it long after the motive which started us has been forgotten. No; Drayton's regard for Mary Leithe must stand

on its own basis, independent of all other considerations.

What, in the next place, was the nature of this regard? Was it merely avuncular, or something different? Drayton assured himself that it was the former. He was a man of the world, and had done with passions. The idea of his falling in love made him smile in a deprecatory manner. That the object of such love should be a girl eighteen years his junior rendered the suggestion yet more irrational. She was lustrous with lovable qualities, which he genially recognized and appreciated; nay, he might love her, but the love would be a quasi-paternal one, not the love that demands absolute possession and brooks no rivalry. His attitude was contemplative and beneficent, not selfish and exclusive. His greatest pleasure would be to see her married to some one worthy of her. Meantime he might devote himself to her freely and without fear.

And yet, once again, was he not the dupe of himself and of a convention? Was his the mood in which an uncle studies his niece, or even a father his daughter? How often during the day was she absent from his thoughts, or from his dreams

at night? What else gave him so much happiness as to please her, and what would he not do to give her pleasure? Why was he dissatisfied and aimless when not in her presence? Why so full-orbed and complete when she was near? He was eighteen years the elder, but there was in her a fullness of nature, a balanced development, which went far toward annulling the discrepancy. Moreover, though she was young, he was not old, and surely he had the knowledge, the resources, and the will to make her life happy. There would be, he fancied, a certain poetical justice in such an issue. It would illustrate the slow, seemingly severe, but really tender wisdom of Providence. Out of the very ashes of his dead hopes would arise this gracious flower of promise. She would afford him scope for the employment of all those riches, moral and material, which life had brought him; she would be his reward for having lived honorably and purely for purity's and honor's sake. But why multiply reasons? There was justification enough; and true love knows nothing of justification.

He loved her, then; and now, did she love him? This was the real problem—the mystery

of a maiden's heart, which all Solomon's wisdom and Bacon's logic fail to elucidate. Drayton did what he could. Once he came to her with the news that he must be absent from an excursion which they had planned, and he saw genuine disappointment darken her sweet face, and her slender figure seem to droop. This was well as far as it went, but beyond that it proved nothing. Another time he gave her a curious little shell which he had picked up while they were rambling together along the beach, and some time afterward he accidently noticed that she was wearing it by a ribbon round her neck. This seemed better. Again, on a night when there was a social gathering at the hotel, he entered the room and sat apart at one of the windows, and as long as he remained there he felt that her gaze was upon him, and twice or thrice when he raised his eyes they were met by hers, and she smiled; and afterward, when he was speaking near her, he noticed that she disregarded what her companion of the moment was saying to her, and listened only to him. Was not all this encouragement? Nevertheless, whenever, presuming upon this, he hazarded less ambiguous demonstrations, she seemed to shrink

back and appear strange and troubled. This behavior perplexed him; he doubted the evidence that had given him hope; feared that he was a fool; that she divined his love, and pitied him, and would have him, if at all, only out of pity. Thereupon he took himself sternly to task, and resolved to give her up.

It was a transparent July afternoon, with white and gray clouds drifting across a clear blue sky, and a southwesterly breeze roughening the dark waves and showing their white shoulders. Mary Leithe and Drayton came slowly along the rocks, he assisting her to climb or descend the more rugged places, and occasionally pausing with her to watch the white canvas of a yacht shiver in the breeze as she went about, or to question whether yonder flash amid the waves, where the gulls were hovering and dipping, were a bluefish breaking water. At length they reached a little nook in the seaward face, which, by often resorting to it, they had in a manner made their own. It was a small shelf in the rock, spacious enough for two to sit in at ease, with a back to lean against, and at one side a bit of level ledge which

served as a stand or table. Before them was the sea, which, at high-water mark, rose to within three yards of their feet; while from the shoreward side they were concealed by the ascending wall of sandstone. Drayton had brought a cushion with him, which he arranged in Mary's seat; and when they had established themselves, he took a volume of Emerson's poems from his pocket and laid it on the rock beside him.

"Are you comfortable?" he asked.

"Yes; I wish it would be always like this—the weather, and the sun, and the time—so that we might stay here forever."

"Forever is the least useful word in human language," observed Drayton. "In the perspective of time, a few hours, or days, or years, seem alike inconsiderable."

"But it is not the same to our hearts, which live forever," she returned.

"The life of the heart is love," said Drayton.

"And that lasts forever," said Mary Leithe.

"True love lasts, but the object changes," was his reply.

"It seems to change sometimes," said she.

"But I think it is only our perception that is misled. We think we have found what we love; but afterward, perhaps, we find it was not in the person we supposed, but in some other. Then we love it in him; not because our heart has changed, but just because it has not."

"Has that been your experience?" Drayton asked, with a smile.

"Oh, I was speaking generally," she said, looking down.

"It may be the truth; but if so, it is a perilous thing to be loved."

"Perilous?"

"Why, yes. How can the lover be sure that he really is what his mistress takes him for? After all, a man has and is nothing in himself. His life, his love, his goodness, such as they are, flow into him from his Creator, in such measure as he is capable or desirous of receiving them. And he may receive more at one time than at another. How shall he know when he may lose the talismanic virtue that won her love—even supposing he ever possessed it?"

"I don't know how to argue," said Mary Leithe; "I can only feel when a thing is true or

not — or when I think it is — and say what I feel."

"Well, I am wise enough to trust the truth of your feeling before any argument."

This assertion somewhat disconcerted Mary Leithe, who never liked to be confronted with her own shadow, so to speak. However, she seemed resolved on this occasion to give fuller utterance than usual to what was in her mind; so, after a pause, she continued, "It is not only how much we are capable of receiving from God, but the peculiar way in which each one of us shows what is in him, that makes the difference in people. It is not the talisman so much as the manner of using it that wins a girl's love. And she may think one manner good until she comes to know that another is better."

"And, later, that another is better still?"

"You trust my feeling less than you thought, you see," said Mary, blushing, and with a tremor of her lips.

"Perhaps I am afraid of trusting it too much," Drayton replied, fixing his eyes upon her. Then he went on, with a changed tone and manner: "This metaphysical discussion of ours reminds me

of one of Emerson's poems, whose book, by-the-by, I brought with me. Have you ever read them?"

"Very few of them," said Mary; "I don't seem to belong to them."

"Not many people can eat them raw, I imagine," rejoined Drayton, laughing. "They must be masticated by the mind before they can nourish the heart, and some of them— However, the one I am thinking of is very beautiful, take it how you will. It is called, 'Give all to Love.' Do you know it!"

Mary shook her head.

"Then listen to it," said Drayton, and he read the poem to her. "What do you think of it?" he asked when he had ended.

"It is very short," said Mary, "and it is certainly beautiful; but I don't understand some parts of it, and I don't think I like some other parts."

"It is a true poem," returned Drayton; "it has a body and a soul; the body is beautiful, but the soul is more beautiful still; and where the body seems incomplete, the soul is most nearly perfect. Be loyal, it says, to the highest good

you know; follow it through all difficulties and dangers; make it the core of your heart and the life of your soul; and yet, be free of it! For the hour may always be at hand when that good that you have lived for and lived in must be given up. And then—what says the poet?

> "'Though thou loved her as thyself,
> As a self of purer clay,
> Though her parting dims the day,
> Stealing grace from all alive,
> Heartily know,
> When half-gods go,
> The gods arrive.'"

There was something ominous in Drayton's tone, quiet and pleasant though it sounded to the ear, and Mary could not speak; she knew that he would speak again, and that his words would bring the issue finally before her.

He shut the book and put it in his pocket. For some time he remained silent, gazing eastward across the waves, which came from afar to break against the rock at their feet. A small white pyramidal object stood up against the horizon verge, and upon this Drayton's attention appeared to be concentrated.

"If you should ever decide to come," he said at length, "and want the services of a courier who knows the ground well, I shall be at your disposal."

"Come where?" she said, falteringly.

"Eastward. To Europe."

"You will go with me?"

"Hardly that. But I shall be there to receive you."

"You are going back?"

"In a month, or thereabouts."

"Oh, Mr. Drayton! Why?"

"Well, for several reasons. My coming here was an experiment. It might have succeeded, but it was made too late. I am too old for this young country. I love it, but I can be of no service to it. On the contrary, so far as I was anything, I should be in the way. It does not need me, and I have been an exile so long as to have lost my right to inflict myself upon it. Yet I am glad to have been here; the little time that I have been here has recompensed me for all the sorrows of my life, and I shall never forget an hour of it as long as I live."

"Are you quite sure that your country does not want you—need you?"

"I should not like my assurance to be made more sure."

"How can you know? Who has told you? Whom have you asked?"

"There are some questions which it is not wise to put; questions whose answers may seem ungracious to give, and are sad to hear."

"But the answer might not seem so. And how can it be given until you ask it?"

Drayton turned and looked at her. His face was losing its resolute composure, and there was a glow in his eyes and in his cheeks that called up an answering warmth in her own.

"Do you know where my country is?" he demanded, almost sternly.

"It is where you are loved and wanted most, is it not?" she said, breathlessly.

"Do not deceive yourself — nor me!" exclaimed Drayton, putting out his hand toward her, and half rising from the rock. "There is only one thing more to say."

A sea-gull flew close by them, and swept on, and in a moment was far away, and lost to sight. So in our lives does happiness come so near us as almost to brush our cheeks with its wings, and

then pass on, and become as unattainable as the stars. As Mary Leithe was about to speak, a shadow cast from above fell across her face and figure. She seemed to feel a sort of chill from it, warm though the day was; and without moving her eyes from Drayton's face to see whence the shadow came, her expression underwent a subtle and sudden change, losing the fervor of a moment before, and becoming relaxed and dismayed. But after a moment Drayton looked up, and immediately rose to his feet, exclaiming, "Frank Redmond!"

On the rock just above them stood a young man, dark of complexion, with eager eyes, and a figure athletic and strong. As Drayton spoke his name, his countenance assumed an expression half-way between pleased surprise and jealous suspicion. Meanwhile Mary Leithe had covered her face with her hands.

"I'm sure I'd no idea you were here, Mr. Drayton," said the young man. "I was looking for Mary Leithe. Is that she?"

Mary uncovered her face, and rose to her feet languidly. She did not as yet look toward Redmond, but she said in a low voice,

"How do you do, Frank? You—came so suddenly!"

"I didn't stop to think—that I might interrupt you," said he, drawing back a little and lifting his head.

Drayton had been observing the two intently, breathing constrainedly the while, and grasping a jutting point of rock with his hand as he stood. He now said, in a genial and matter-of-fact voice, "Well, Master Frank, I shall have an account to settle with you when you and my niece have got through your first greetings."

"Mary your niece!" cried Redmond, bewildered.

"My niece by courtesy; her mother was a dear friend of mine before Mary was born. And now it appears that she is the young lady, the dearest and loveliest ever heard of, about whom you used to rhapsodize to me in Dresden! Why didn't you tell me her name? By Jove, you young rogue, I've a good mind to refuse my consent to the match! What if I had married her off to some other young fellow, and you been left in the lurch! However, luckily for you, I haven't been able thus far to find any one who in my opinion

would suit her better. Come down here and shake hands, Frank, and then I'll leave you to make your excuses to Miss Leithe. And the next time you come back to her after a year's absence, don't frighten her heart into her mouth by springing out on her like a jack-in-the-box. Send a bunch of flowers or a signet-ring to tell her you are coming, or you may get a cooler reception than you'd like!"

"Ah! Ambrose Drayton," he sighed to himself as he clambered down the rocks alone, and sauntered along the shore, "there is no fool like an old fool. Where were your eyes that you couldn't have seen what was the matter? Her heart was fighting against itself all the time, poor child! And you, selfish brute, bringing to bear on her all your antiquated charms and fascinations—Heaven save the mark!—and bullying her into the belief that you could make her happy! Thank God, Ambrose Drayton, that your awakening did not come too late. A minute more would have made her and you miserable for life—and Redmond too, confound him! And yet they might have told me; one of them might

have told me, surely. Even at my age it is hard to remember one's own insignificance. And I did love her! God knows how I loved her! I hope he loves her as much; but how can he help it! And she—she won't remember long! An old fellow who made believe he was her uncle, and made rather a fool of himself; went back to Europe, and never been heard of since. Ah, me!"

"Where did you get acquainted with Mr. Drayton, Frank?"

"At Dresden. It was during the vacation at Freiberg last winter, and I had come over to Dresden to have a good time. We stayed at the same hotel. We played a game of billiards together, and he chatted with me about America, and asked me about my mining studies at Freiberg; and I thought him about the best fellow I'd ever met. But I didn't know then—I hadn't any conception what a splendid fellow he really was. If ever I hear anybody talking of their ideal of a gentleman, I shall ask them if they ever met Ambrose Drayton."

"What did he do?"

"Well, the story isn't much to my credit; if

it hadn't been for him, you might never have heard of me again; and it will serve me right to confess the whole thing to you. It's about a—woman."

"What sort of a woman?"

"She called herself a countess; but there's no telling what she really was. I only know she got me into a fearful scrape, and if it hadn't been for Mr. Drayton—"

"Did you do anything wrong, Frank?"

"No; upon my honor as a gentleman! If I had, Mary, I wouldn't be here now."

Mary looked at him with a sad face. "Of course I believe you, Frank," she said. "But I think I would rather not hear any more about it."

"Well, I'll only tell you what Mr. Drayton did. I told him all about it—how it began, and how it went on, and all; and how I was engaged to a girl in America—I didn't tell him your name; and I wasn't sure, then, whether you'd ever marry me, after all; because, you know, you had been awfully angry with me before I went away, because I wanted to study in Europe instead of staying at home. But, you see, I've

got my diploma, and that'll give me a better start than I ever should have had if I'd only studied here. However — what was I saying? Oh! so he said he would find out about the countess, and talk to her himself. And how he managed I don't know; and he gave me a tremendous hauling over the coals for having been such an idiot; but it seems that instead of being a poor injured, deceived creature, with a broken heart, and all that sort of thing, she was a regular adventuress—an old hand at it, and had got lots of money out of other fellows for fear she would make a row. But Mr. Drayton had an interview with her. I was there, and I never shall forget it if I live to a hundred. You never saw anybody so quiet, so courteous, so resolute, and so immitigably stern as he was. And yet he seemed to be stern only against the wrong she was trying to do, and to be feeling kindness and compassion for her all the time. She tried everything she knew, but it wasn't a bit of use, and at last she broke down and cried, and carried on like a child. Then Mr. Drayton took her out of the room, and I don't know what happened, but I've always suspected that he sent her off with money enough

in her pocket to become an honest woman with if she chose to; but he never would admit it to me. He came back to me after a while, and told me to have nothing more to do with any woman, good or bad, except the woman I meant to marry, and I promised him I wouldn't, and I kept my promise. But we have him to thank for our happiness, Mary."

Tears came silently into Mary's eyes; she said nothing, but sat with her hands clasped around one knee, gazing seaward.

"You don't seem very happy, though," pursued Redmond, after a pause; "and you acted so oddly when I first found you and Mr. Drayton together—I almost thought—well, I didn't know what to think. You do love me, don't you?"

For a few moments Mary Leithe sat quite motionless, save for a slight tremor of the nerves that pervaded her whole body; and then, all at once, she melted into sobs. Redmond could not imagine what was the matter with her; but he put his arms round her, and after a little hesitation or resistance, the girl hid her face upon his shoulder, and wept for the secret that she would never tell.

But Mary Leithe's nature was not a stubborn one, and easily adapted itself to the influences with which she was most closely in contact. When she and Redmond presented themselves at Aunt Corwin's cottage that evening her tears were dried, and only a tender dimness of the eyes and a droop of her sweet mouth betrayed that she had shed any.

"Mr. Drayton wanted to be remembered to you, Mary," observed Aunt Corwin, shortly before going to bed. She had been floating colored sea-weeds on paper all the time since supper, and had scarcely spoken a dozen words.

"Has he gone?" Mary asked.

"Who? Oh, yes; he had a telegram, I believe. His trunks were to follow him. He said he would write. I liked that man. He was not like Mr. Haymaker; he was a gentleman. He took an interest in my collections, and gave me several nice specimens. Your mother was a fool not to have married him. I wish you could have married him yourself. But it was not to be expected that he would care for a child like you, even if your head were not turned by that Frank Redmond. How soon shall you let him marry you?"

"Whenever he likes," answered Mary Leithe, turning away.

As a matter of fact, they were married the following winter. A week before the ceremony a letter arrived for Mary from New York, addressed in a legal hand. It contained an intimation that, in accordance with the instructions of their client, Mr. Ambrose Drayton, the undersigned had placed to her account the sum of fifty thousand dollars as a preliminary bequest, it being the intention of Mr. Drayton to make her his heir. There was an inclosure from Drayton himself, which Mary, after a moment's hesitation, placed in her lover's hand, and bade him break the seal.

It contained only a few lines, wishing happiness to the bride and bridegroom, and hoping they all might meet in Europe, should the wedding trip extend so far. "And as for you, my dear niece," continued the writer, "whenever you think of me remember that little poem of Emerson's that we read on the rocks the last time I saw you. The longer I live the more of truth do I find in it, especially in the last verse:

"'Heartily know,
When half-gods go,
The gods arrive!'"

"What does that mean?" demanded Redmond, looking up from the letter.

"We can not know except by experience," answered Mary Leithe.

"SET NOT THY FOOT ON GRAVES."

New York, April 29th.—Last night I came upon this passage in my old author: "Friend, take it sadly home to thee—Age and Youthe are strangers still. Youthe, being ignorant of the wisdome of Age, which is Experience, but wise with its own wisdome, which is of the unshackeled Soule, or Intuition, is great in Enterprise, but slack in Achievement. Holding itself equal to all attempts and conditions, and to be heir, not of its own spanne of yeares and compasse of Faculties only, but of all time and all Human Nature—such, I saye, being its illusion (if, indeede, it be illusion, and not in some sorte a Truth), it still underrateth the value of Opportunitie, and, in the vain beleefe that the City of its Expectation is paved with Golde and walled

with Precious Stones, letteth slip betwixt its fingers those diamondes and treasures which ironical Fate offereth it. . . . But see nowe what the case is when this youthe becometh in yeares. For nowe he can nowise understand what defecte of Judgmente (or effecte of insanitie rather) did leade him so to despise and, as it were, reject those Giftes and golden chaunces which come but once to mortal men. Experience (that saturnine Pedagogue) hath taught him what manner of man he is, and that, farre from enjoying that Deceptive Seeminge or mirage of Freedome which would persuade him that he may run hither and thither as the whim prompteth over the face of the Earthe—yea, take the wings of the morninge and winnowe his aerie way to the Pleiadies—he must e'en plod heavilie and with paine along that single and narrowe Path whereto the limitations of his personal nature and profession confine him—happy if he arrive with muche diligence and faire credit at the ende thereof, and falle not ignobly by the way. Neverthelesse—for so great is the infatuation of man, who, although he acquireth all other knowledge, yet arriveth not at the knowledge of Himself—if to the Sage of

Experience he proffered once again the gauds and prizes of youthe, which he hath ever since regretted and longed for—what doeth he in his wisdome? Verilie, so longe as the matter remaineth *in nubibis*, as the Latins say, or in the Region of the Imagination, as oure speeche hath it, he will beleeve, yea, take his oathe, that he still is master of all those capacities and energies whiche, in his youthe, would have prompted and enabled him to profit by this desired occurrence. Yet shall it appeare (if the thinge be brought still further to the teste, and, from an Imagination or Dreame, become an actual Realitie), that he will shrinke from and decline that which he did erste so ardently sigh for and covet. And the reason of this is as follows, to-wit: That Habit or Custome hath brought him more to love and affect those very ways and conditions of life, yea, those inconveniences and deficiencies which he useth to deplore and abhorre, than that Crown of Golde or Jewel of Happiness whose withholding he hath all his life lamented. Hence we may learne, that what is past, is dead, and that though thoughte be free, nature is ever captive, and loveth her chaine."

This is too lugubrious and cynical not to have some truth in it; but I am unwilling to believe that more than half of it is true. The author himself was evidently an old man, and therefore a prejudiced judge; and he did not make allowances for the range and variety of temperament. Age is not a matter of years, and scarcely of experience. The only really old persons are the selfish ones. The man whose thoughts, actions, and affections center upon himself, soon acquires a fixity and crustiness which (if to be old is to be "strange to youth") is old as nothing else is. But the man who makes the welfare and happiness of others his happiness, is as young at threescore as he was at twenty, and perhaps even younger, for he has had no time to grow old.

April 30th. — The Courtneys are in town! This is, I believe, her first visit to America since he married her. At all events, I have not seen or heard of her in all these seven years. I wonder . . . I was going to write, I wonder whether she remembers me. Of course she remembers me, in a sort of way. I am tied up somewhere among her bundle of recollections, and occasionally, in an idle moment, her eye falls

upon me, and moves her, perhaps, to smile or to sigh. For my own part, in thinking over our old days, I find I forget her less than I had supposed. Probably she has been more or less consciously in my mind throughout. In the same way, one has always latent within him the knowledge that he must die; but it does not follow that he is continually musing on the thought of death. As with death, so with this old love of mine. What a difference, if we had married! She was a very lovely girl—at least, I thought so then. Very likely I should not think her so now. My taste and knowledge have developed; a different order of things interests me. It may not be an altogether pleasant thing to confess; but, knowing myself as I now do, I have often thanked my stars that I am a bachelor.

Doubtless she is even more changed than I am. A woman changes more than a man in seven years, and a married woman especially must change a great deal from twenty-two to twenty-nine. Think of Ethel Leigh being in her thirtieth year! and the mother of four or five children, perhaps. Well, for the matter of that, think of the romantic and ambitious young

Claude Campbell being an old bachelor of forty! I have married Art instead of Ethel, and she, instead of being Mrs. Campbell, is Mrs. Courtney.

It was a surprising thing—her marrying him so suddenly. But, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, I have never quite made up my mind that Ethel was really fickle. She did it out of pique, or pride, or impulse, or whatever it is that sways women in such cases. She was angry, or indignant—how like fire and ice at once she was when she was angry!—and she was resolved to show me that she could do without me. She would not listen to my explanations; and I was always awkward and stiff about making explanations. Besides, it was not an easy matter to explain, especially to a girl like her. With a married woman or a widow it would have been a simple thing enough. But Ethel Leigh, the minister's daughter—innocent, ignorant, passionate—she would tolerate nothing short of a public disavowal and discontinuance of my relations with Mrs. Murray, and that, of course, I could not consent to, though heaven knows (and so must Ethel, by this time) that Mrs. Murray was nothing to

me, save as she was the wife of my friend, during whose enforced absence I was bound to look after her, to some extent. It was not my fault that poor Mrs. Murray was a fool. But such are the trumpery seeds from which tragedies grow. Not that ours was a tragedy, exactly: Ethel married her English admirer, and I became a somewhat distinguished artist, that is all. I wonder whether she has been happy! Likely enough; she was born to be wealthy; Englishmen make good husbands sometimes, and her London life must have been a brilliant one. . . . I have been looking at my old photograph of her—the one she gave me the morning after we were engaged. Tall, slender, dark, with level brows, and the bearing of a Diana. She certainly was handsome, and I shall not run the risk of spoiling this fine memory by calling on her. Even if she have not deteriorated, she can scarcely have improved. Nay, even were she the same now as then, I should not find her so, because of the change in myself. Why should I blink the truth? Experience, culture, and the sober second thought of middle age have carried me far beyond the point where I could any longer be in sympathy with this crude, thin-skinned, im-

pulsive girl. And then—four or five children! Decidedly, I will give her a wide berth. And Courtney himself, with his big beard, small brain, and obtrusive laugh! I shall step across to California for a few months.

May 1st.—Called this morning on Ethel Leigh—Mrs. Deighton Courtney, that is to say. She is not so much changed, but she has certainly improved. When I say she has not changed much, I refer to her physical appearance. Her features are scarcely altered; her figure is a little fuller and more compact; in her bearing there is a certain quiet composure and self-possession—the air of a woman who has seen the world, has received admiration, and is familiar with the graceful little arts of social intercourse. In short, she has acquired a high external polish; and that is precisely what she most needed. Evidently, too, there is an increased mental refinement corresponding to the outward manner. She has mellowed, sweetened—whether deepened or not I should hesitate to affirm. But I am quite sure that I find her more charming to talk with, more supple in intercourse, more fascinating, in a word, than formerly. We chatted discursively and

rather volubly for more than an hour; yet we did not touch on anything very serious or profound. They are staying at the Brevoort House. Courtney himself, by-the-by, is still in Boston (they landed there), where business will detain him a few days. Ethel goes on a house-hunting expedition to-morrow, and I am going with her; for New York has altered out of her recollection during these seven years. They are to remain here three years, perhaps longer. Courtney is to establish and oversee an American branch of his English business.

They have only one child—a pretty little thing: Susie and I became great friends.

Mrs. Courtney opened the door of the private sitting-room in which I was awaiting her, and came in—beautifully! She has learned how to do that since I knew her. My own long residence in Paris has made me more critical than I used to be in such matters; but I do not remember having met any woman in society with manners more nearly perfect than Mrs. Courtney's. Ethel Leigh used to be, upon occasion, painfully abrupt and disconcerting; and her movements and attitudes, though there was abundant native

grace in them, were often careless and unconventional. Of course, I do not forget that niceties of deportment, without sound qualities of mind and heart to back them, are of trifling value; but the two kinds of attraction are by no means incompatible with each other. Mrs. Courtney smiles often. Ethel Leigh used to smile rarely, although, when the smile did come, it was irresistibly winning; there was in it exquisite significance and tenderness. It is a beautiful smile still, but that charm of rarity (if it be a charm) is lacking. It is a conventional smile more than a spontaneous or a happy one; indeed, it led me to surmise that she had perhaps not been very happy since we last met, and had learned to use this smile as a sort of veil. Not that I suppose for a moment that Courtney has ill-treated her. I never could see anything in the man beyond a superficial comeliness, a talent for business, and an affable temper; but he was not in any sense a bad fellow. Besides, he was over head and ears in love with her; and Ethel would be sure to have the upper hand of a nature like his. No, her unhappiness, if she be unhappy, would be due to no such cause, she and her husband are no doubt on good terms

with each other. But—suppose she has discovered that he fell short of what she demanded in a husband; that she overmatched him; that, in order to make their life smooth, she must descend to him? I imagine it may be something of that kind. Poor Mrs. Courtney!

She addressed me as "Mr. Campbell," and I dare say she was right. Women best know how to meet these situations. To have called me "Claude" would have placed us in a false position, by ignoring the changes that have taken place. It is wise to respect these barriers; they are conventional, but, rightly considered, they are more of an assistance than of an obstacle to freedom of intercourse. I asked her how she liked England. She smiled and said, "It was my business to like England; still, I am glad to see America once more."

"You will entertain a great deal, I presume —that sort of thing?"

"We shall hope to make friends with people —and to meet old friends. It is such a pleasant surprise to find you here. I heard you were settled in Paris."

"So I was, for several years; the Parisians

said nice things about my pictures. But one may weary even of Paris. I returned here two years ago, and am now as much of a fixture in New York as if I'd never left it."

"But not a permanent fixture. Shall we never see you in London?"

"My present probabilities lie rather in the direction of California. I want to make some studies of the scenery and the atmosphere. Besides, I am getting too old to think of another European residence."

"No one gets old after thirty—especially no bachelor!" she answered, with a smile. "But if you were ever to feel old, the society of London would rejuvenate you."

"It has certainly done you no harm. But you have the happiness to be married."

She looked at me pleasantly and said, "Yes, I make a good Englishwoman." That sounded like an evasion, but the expression of her face was not evasive. In the old days she would probably have flushed up and said something cutting.

"You must see my little girl," she said, after a while.

The child was called, and presently came in. She resembles her mother, and has a vivacity scarcely characteristic of English children. I am not constitutionally a worshiper of children, but I liked Susie. She put her arms round her mother's arm, and gazed at me with wide-eyed scrutiny."

"This is Mr. Campbell," said mamma.

"My name is Susan Courtney," said the little thing. "We are going to stay in New York three years. Not here—this is only an hotel—we are going to have a house. How do you do? This is my dolly."

I saluted dolly, and thereby inspired its parent with confidence: she put her hand in mine, and gave me her smooth little cheek to kiss. "You are not like papa," she then observed.

I smiled conciliatingly, being uncertain whether it were prudent to follow this lead; but Mrs. Courtney asked, "In what way different, dear?"

"Papa has a beard," replied Susie.

The incident rather struck me; it seemed to indicate that Mrs. Courtney was under no apprehension that the child would say anything embar-

rassing about the father. Having learned so much, I ventured farther.

"Do you love papa or mamma best?" I inquired.

"I am with mamma most," she answered, after meditation, "but when papa comes, I like him."

This was non-committal. She continued, "Papa is coming here day after to-morrow. To-morrow, mamma and I are going to find a house."

"Your husband leaves all that to you?" I said, turning to Mrs. Courtney.

"Mr. Courtney never knows or cares what sort of a place he lives in. It took me some little time to get used to that. I wanted everything to be just in a certain way. They used to laugh at me, and say I was more English than he."

"Now that you are both here, you must both be American."

"He doesn't enjoy America much. Of course, it is very different from London. An Englishman can not be expected to care for American ways and American quickness, and—"

"American people?" I put in, laughingly.

"Don't undress dolly here," she said to Susie. "It isn't time yet to put her to bed, and she might catch cold."

Was this another evasion? The serene face betrayed nothing, but she had left unanswered the question that aimed at discovering how she and her husband stood toward each other. After all, however, no answer could have told me more than her no answer did—supposing it to have been intentional. I soon afterward took my leave, after having arranged to call to-morrow and accompany her and Susie on their house-hunting expedition.

Upon the whole, I don't think I am sorry to have renewed my acquaintance with her. She is more delightful — as an acquaintance — than when I knew her formerly. Should I have fallen in love with her had I met her for the first time as she is now? Yes, and no! In the old days there was something about her that commanded me—that fascinated my youthful imagination. Perhaps it was only the freshness, the ignorance, the timidity of young maidenhood — that mystery of possibilities of a nature that has not yet met the world and received its impress for

good or evil. It is this which captivates in youth; and this, of course, Mrs. Courtney has lost. But every quality that might captivate mature manhood is hers, and, were I likely to think of marriage now, and were she marriageable, she is the type of woman I would choose. Yet I do not quite relish the perception that my present feminine ideal (whether it be lower or higher) is not the former one. But, frankly, would I marry her if I could? I hardly know: I have got out of the habit of regarding marriage as among my possibilities; many avenues of happiness that once were open to me are now closed against me. Put it, that I have lost a faculty—that I am now able to enjoy only in imagination a phase of existence that, formerly, I could have enjoyed in fact. This bit of self-analysis may be erroneous; but I would not like to run the risk of proving it so! Am I not well enough off as I am? My health is fair, my mind active, my reputation secure, my finances prosperous. The things that I can dream must surely be better than anything that could happen. I can picture, for example, a state of matrimonial felicity which no marriage of mine could realize. Besides, I can, whenever I choose,

see Mrs. Courtney herself, talk with her, and enjoy her as a reasonable and congenial friend, apart from the danger and disappointment that might result from a closer connection. I think I have chosen the wiser part, or, rather, the wiser part has been thrust upon me. That I shall never be wildly happy is, at least, security that I shall never be profoundly miserable. I shall simply be comfortable.

Is this sour grapes? Am I, if not counting, then discounting my eggs before they are hatched? To such questions a practical—a materialized—answer would be the only conclusive one. Were Mrs. Courtney ready to drop into my mouth, I should either open my mouth, or else I should shut it, and either act would be conclusive. But, so far from being ready to drop into my mouth, she is immovably and (to all appearances) contentedly fixed where she is. I suppose I am insinuating that appearances are deceptive; that she may be unhappy with her husband, and desire to leave him. Well, there is no technical evidence in support of such an hypothesis; but, again, in a matter of this kind, it is not so much the technical as the indirect evidence that tells—the ca-

dences of the voice, the breathing, the silences, the atmosphere. There is no denying that I did somehow acquire a vague impression that Courtney is not so large a figure in his wife's eyes as he might be. I may have been biased by my previous conception of his character, or I may have misinterpreted the impalpable, indescribable signs that I remarked in her. But, once more, how do I know that her not caring for him would postulate her caring for me? Why should she care for either of us? Our old romance is to her as the memory of something read in a book, and it is powerless to make her heart beat one throb the faster. Were Courtney to die to-morrow, would his widow expect me to marry her? Not she! She would settle down here quietly, educate her daughter, and think better of her departed husband with every year that passed, and less of repeating the experiment that made her his! I may be prone to romantic and elaborate speculations, but I am not exactly a fool. I do not delude myself with the idea that Mrs. Courtney is, at this moment, following my example by recording her impressions of me at her own writing-desk, and asking herself whether—if such and

such a thing were to happen — such another would be apt to follow. No; she has put Susie to bed, and is by this time asleep herself, after having read through the "Post," or "Bazar," or the last new novel, as her predilection may be. It is after midnight; since she has not followed my example, I will follow hers; it is much the more sensible of the two.

May 2d.—What a woman she is! and, in a different sense, what a man I am! How little does a man know or suspect himself until he is brought to the proof! How serenely and securely I philosophized and laid down the law yesterday! and to-day, how strange to contrast the event with my prognostication of it! And yet, again, how little has happened that might not be told in such a way as to appear nothing! It was the latent meaning, the spirit, the touch of look and tone. Her husband may have reached New York by this time; they may be together at this moment; he will find no perceptible change in her—perceptible to him! He will be told that I have been her escort during the day, and that I was polite and serviceable, and that a house

has been selected. What more is there to tell? Nothing—that he could hear or understand! and yet—everything! He will say, "Yes, I recollect Campbell; nice fellow; have him to dine with us one of these days." But I shall never sit at their table; I shall never see her again; I can not! I shall start for California next week. Meanwhile I will write down the history of one day, for it is well to have these things set visibly before one—to grasp the nettle, as it were. Nothing is so formidable as it appears when we shrink from defining it to ourselves.

I drove to the hotel in my brougham at eleven o'clock, as we had previously arranged. She was ready and waiting for me, and little Susie was with her. Ethel was charmingly dressed, and there was a soft look in her eyes as she turned them on me—a look that seemed to say, "I remember the past; it is pleasant to see you, so pleasant as to be sad!" Susie came to me as if I were an old friend, and I lifted the child from the floor and kissed her twice.

"Why did you give me two kisses?" she demanded, as I put her down. "Papa always gives me only one kiss."

"Papa has mamma as well as you to kiss; but I have no one; I am an old bachelor."

"When you have known mamma longer, will you kiss her too?"

"Old bachelors kiss nobody but little girls," I replied, laughing.

We went down to the brougham, and after we were seated and on our way, Ethel said, "Already I feel so much at home in New York, it almost startles me. I fancied I should have forgotten old associations—should have grown out of sympathy with them; but I seem only to have learned to appreciate them more. Our memory for some things is better than we would believe."

"There are two memories in us," I remarked; "the memory of the heart and the memory of the head. The former never is lost, though the other may be. But I had not supposed that you cared very deeply for the American period of your life."

"England is very agreeable," she said, rather hastily. She turned her head and looked out of the window; but after a pause she added, as if to herself, "but I am an American!"

"There is, no doubt, a deep-rooted and substantial repose in English life such as is scarcely

to be found elsewhere," I said; "but, for all that, I have often thought that the best part of domestic happiness could exist nowhere but here. Here a man may marry the woman he loves, and their affection for each other will be made stronger by the hardships they may have to pass through. After all, when we come to the end of our lives, it is not the business we have done, nor the social distinction we have enjoyed—it is the love we have given and received that we are glad of."

"Mamma," inquired Susie, "does Mr. Campbell love you?"

We both of us looked at the child and laughed a little. "Mr. Campbell is an old friend," said Ethel. After a few moments she blushed. She held in her hand some house-agents' orders to view houses, and these she now began to examine. "Is this Madison Avenue place likely to be a good one?" she asked me.

"It is conveniently situated and comfortable; but I should think it might be too large for a family of three. Perhaps, though, you don't like a close fit?"

"I don't like empty rooms, though I prefer such rooms as there are to be large. But it

doesn't make much difference. Mr. Courtney moves about a good deal, and he is as happy in a hotel as anywhere. These American hotels are luxurious and splendid, but they are not home-like to me."

"I remember you used to dislike being among a crowd of people you didn't know."

"Yes, and I haven't yet learned to be sociable in that way. A friend is more company for me than a score of acquaintances. Dear me! I'm afraid New York will spoil me—for England!"

"Perhaps Mr. Courtney may be cured of England by New York."

She smiled and said, "Perhaps! He accommodates himself to things more easily than I do, but I think one needs to be born in America to know how to love it."

Under the veil of discussing America and things in general, we were talking of ourselves, awakening reminiscences of the past, and discovering, with a pleasure we did not venture to acknowledge, that—allowing for the events and the years that had come between—we were as much in accord as when we were young lovers. Yes, as much, and perhaps even more. For

surely, if one grows in the right way, the sphere of knowledge and sympathy must enlarge, and thereby the various points of contact between two minds and hearts must be multiplied. Ethel and I, during these seven years, had traveled our round of daily life on different sides of the earth; but the miles of sea and land which had physically separated us had been powerless to estrange our spirits. Nothing is more strange, in this mysterious complexity of impressions and events that we call human existence, than the fact that two beings, entirely cut off from all natural means of association and communion, may yet, unknown to each other, be breathing the same spiritual air and learning the same moral and intellectual lessons. Like two seeds of the same species, planted, the one in American soil, the other in English, Ethel and I had selected, by some instinct of the soul, the same elements from our different surroundings; so that now, when we met once more, we found a close and harmonious resemblance between the leaves and blossoms of our experience. What can be more touching and delightful than such a discovery? Or what more sad than to know that it came too late for us to profit by it?

Oh, Ethel, how easy it is to take the little step that separates light from darkness, happiness from misery! Remembering that we live but once, and that the worthy enjoyments of life are so limited in number and so hard to get, it seems unjust and monstrous that one little hour of jealousy or misunderstanding should wreck the fair prospects of months and years. Why is mischief so much readier to our hand than good?

We got out at a house near the Park. I assisted Ethel to alight, and, as her hand rested on mine, the thought crossed my mind—How sweet if this were our own home that we are about to enter!—and I glanced at her face to see whether a like thought had visited her. She maintained a subdued demeanor, with an expression about the mouth and eyes of a peculiar timid gentleness, and, as it were, a sort of mental leaning upon me for support and protection. She felt, it may be, a little fear of herself, at finding herself—in more senses than one—so near to me; and, woman-like, she depended upon me to protect her against the very peril of which I was the occasion. No higher or more delicate compliment can be paid by a woman to a man; and I resolved that I

would do what in me lay to deserve it. But such resolutions are the hardest in the world to keep, because the circumstance or the impulse of the moment is continually in wait to betray you. Ethel was more fascinating and lovely in this mood than in any other I had hitherto seen her in; and the misgiving, from which I could not free myself, that the man whom Fate had made her husband did not appreciate or properly cherish the gift bestowed upon him, made me warm toward her more than ever. I could scarcely have believed that such blood could flow in the sober veins of my middle age; but love knows nothing of time or age!

"I do not like this house," Susie declared, when we had been admitted by the care-taker. "It has no carpets, nor chairs, nor pictures; and the floor is dirty; and the walls are not pretty!"

"I suppose one can have these houses decorated and furnished at short notice?" Ethel asked me.

"It would not take long. There are several firms that make it their specialty."

"I have always wanted to live in a house where the colors and forms were to my taste. I

don't know whether you remember that you used to think I had some taste in such matters. Mr. Courtney, of course, doesn't care much about art, and he didn't encourage me to carry out my ideas. A business man can not be an artist, you know."

"You yourself would have become an artist if—" I began; but I was approaching dangerous ground, and I stopped. "This dining-room might be done in Indian red," I remarked—"the woodwork, that is to say. The walls would be a warm salmon color, which contrasts well with the cold blue of the china, which it is the fashion to have about nowadays. As for the furniture, antique dark oak is as safe as anything, don't you think so?"

"I should like all that," said she, moving a little nearer me, and letting her eyes wander about the room with a pleased expression, until at length they met my own. "If you could only design our decoration for us, I'm sure it would be perfect; at least, I should be satisfied. Well, and how should we . . . how ought the drawing-room to be done?"

"There is a shade of yellow that is very agree-

able for drawing-rooms, and it goes very well with the dull peacock-blue which is in vogue now. Then you could get one of those bloomy Morris friezes. There is some very graceful Chippendale to be picked up in various places. And no such good furniture is made nowadays. But I am advising you too much from the artist's point of view."

"Oh, I can get other sort of advice when I want it." She looked at me with a smile; our glances met more often now than at first. "But it seems to me," she went on, "that the way the house is built does not suit the way we want to decorate it. Let us look at a smaller one. I should think ten rooms would be quite enough. And it would be nice to have a corner house, would it not?"

"If the question were only of our agreement, there would probably not be much difficulty," I said, in a tone which I tried to make merely courteous, but which may have revealed something more than courtesy beneath it.

In coming down-stairs she gathered her dress in her right hand and put her left in my arm; and then, in a flash, the picture came before me

of the last time we had gone arm-in-arm together down-stairs. It was at her father's house, and she was speaking to me of that unlucky Mrs. Murray; we had our quarrel that evening in the drawing-room, and it was never made up. From then till now, what a gulf! and yet those years would have been but a bridge to pass over, save for the one barrier that was insurmountable between us.

"What has become of that Mrs. Murray whom you used to know?" she asked, as we reached the foot of the stairs. She relinquished my arm as she spoke, and faced me.

I felt the blood come to my face. "Mrs. Murray was in my thoughts at the same moment —and perhaps by the same train of associations." I answered, "I don't know where she is now; I lost sight of her years ago — soon after you were married, in fact. Why do you ask?"

"You had not forgotten her, then?"

"I had every reason to forget her, except the one reason for which I have remembered her— and you know what that is! Have you mistrusted me all this time?"

"Oh, no—no! I don't think I really mistrusted you at all; and long ago I admitted to myself that you had acted unselfishly and honorably. But I was angry at the time; you know, sometimes a girl will be angry, even when there is no good reason for it. I have long wished for an opportunity to tell you this, for my own sake, you know, as well as for yours."

"I hardly know whether I am most glad or sorry to hear this," I said, as we moved toward the door. "If you had only been able to say it, or to think it, before . . . there would have been a great difference!"

"The worst of mistakes is, they are so seldom set right at the time, or in the way they ought to be. Come, Susie, we are going away now. Susie, do you most like to be American or English?"

"English," replied Susie, without hesitation.

Her mother turned to me and said in a low tone:

"I love her, whichever she is."

I understood what she meant. Susie was the symbol of that inevitable element in our lives which seems to evolve itself without reference to

our desires or efforts; but which, nevertheless, when we have recognized that it is inevitable, we learn (if we are wise) to accept and even to love. Save for the estrangement between Ethel and myself, Susie would never have existed; yet there she was, a beautiful child, who had as good a right to be as either of us; and her mother loved her, and, as it were, bade me love her also. I took the little maiden by the hand and said, "You are right, Susie; the Americans are the children of the English, and can not expect to be so wise and comfortable as they. But you must remember that the Americans have a future before them, and we are not enemies any more. Will you be friends with me, and let me call you my little girl?"

"I shouldn't mind being your little girl, if I could still have the same mamma," was Susie's reply. "Papa is away a great deal, and you could be papa, you know, until he came back."

I made some laughing answer; but, in fact, Susie's frank analysis of the situation poignantly kindled an imagination which stood in no need of stimulus. Ah, if this were the Golden Age,

when love never went astray, how happy we might be! But it is not the Golden Age—far from it! Meanwhile, I think I can assert, with a clear conscience, that no dishonorable purpose possessed me. I loved Ethel too profoundly to wish to do her wrong. Yet I may have wished —I did wish—that a kindly Providence might have seen fit to remove the disabilities that controlled us. If a wish could have removed Courtney painlessly to another world, I think I should have wished it. There was something exquisitely touching in Ethel's appearance and manner. She is as pure as any woman that ever lived; but she is a woman! and I felt that, for this day, I had a man's power over her. Occasionally I was conscious that her eyes were resting on my face; when I addressed her, her aspect softened and brightened; she fell into little moods of preoccupation, from which she would emerge with a sigh; in many ways she betrayed, without knowing it, the secret that neither of us would mention. I do not mean to imply that she expected me to mention it. A pure woman does not realize the dangers of the world; and that very fact is itself her strongest security against them. But,

had I spoken, she would have responded. It was a temptation which I could hardly have believed I could have resisted as I did; but such a woman calls out all that is best and noblest in a man; and, at the time, I was better than I am!

When we were in the brougham again, I said, "If you will allow me, I will drive you to a house I have seen, which belongs to a man with whom I am slightly acquainted. He is on the point of leaving it, but his furniture is still in it, and, as he is himself an artist and a man of taste, it will be worth your while to look at it. He is rather deaf, but that is all the better; we can express our opinions without disturbing him. Perhaps you might arrange to take house and furniture as they stand."

"Whatever you advise, I shall like to do," Ethel answered.

We presently arrived at the house, which was situated in the upper part of the town, a little to the west of Fifth Avenue. It was a comely gabled edifice of red brick, with square bay-windows and a roomy porch. The occupant, Maler, a German, happened to be at home; and on my

sending in my card, we were admitted at once, and he came to greet us in the hall in his usual hearty, headlong fashion.

"My good Campbell," he exclaimed, in his blundering English, "very delighted to see you. Ah, dis will be madame, and de little maid! So you are married since some time—I have not know it! Your servant, Madame Campbell. I know—all de artists know—your husband: we wish we could paint how he can—but it is impossible! Ha, ha, ha! not so! Now, I am very pleased you shall see dis house. May I beg de honor of accompany you? First you shall see de studio; dat I call de stomach of de house, eh? because it is most important of all de places, and make de rest of de places live. See, I make dat window be put in—you find no better light in New York. Den you see, here we have de alcove, where Madame Campbell shall sit and make her sewing, while de husband do his work on de easel. How you like dat portiere? I design him myself—oh, yes, I do all here; you keep them if you like; I go to Germany, perhaps not come back after some years, so I leave dem, not so? Now I show you my little chamber of the piano.

See, I make an arched ceiling—groined arch, eh? —and I gild him; so I get pretty light and pretty sound, not? Ah! madame, I have not de happiness to be married, but I make my house so, dat if I get me a wife, she find all ready; but no wife come, so I give him over to Herr Campbell and you. Now we mount up-stairs to de bed-rooms, eh?"

In this way he went over the entire house with us. His loud, jolly voice, his resounding laugh, his bustling manner, his heedless, boy-like self-confidence, and his deafness, made it impossible to get in a word of explanation, and, after a few efforts, I gave up the attempt.

"Let him suppose what he likes," I said aside to Ethel, "it can make no difference; he is going away, and you will never see him again. After all these years, it can do no great harm for us to play at being Mr. and Mrs. Campbell for an hour!"

"It is a very beautiful house," she said, tacitly accepting what I had proposed. "It is such a house as I have always dreamed of living in. I shall not care to look at any others. Will you tell him that we—that I will take it just as it

stands. You have made this a very pleasant day for me—a very happy day," she added, in a lower tone. "Every room here will be associated with you. You will come here often and see me, will you not? Perhaps, after all, you might use the studio to paint my—or Susie's portrait in."

"I shall inflict myself upon you very often, I have no doubt," was all I ventured to reply. I could not tell her, at that moment, that we must never see each other again. She—after the manner of women—probably supposes that a man's strength is limitless; that he may do with himself and make of himself what he chooses; and she supposes that I could visit her and converse with her day after day, and yet keep my thoughts and my acts within such bounds as would enable me to take Courtney honestly by the hand. But I know too well my own weakness, and I shall leave her while yet I have power to do so. To-morrow—or soon—I will write to her one last letter, telling her why I go.

Sudden and strange indeed has been this passionate episode in a life which, methought, had done with passion. It has lasted hardly so many hours as I have lived years; and yet, were I to

live on into the next century, it would never cease to influence me in all I think and do. I can not solve to my satisfaction this problem—why two lives should be wasted as ours have been. Courtney could have been happy with another wife, or with no wife at all, perhaps; but, for Ethel and me, there could be no happiness save in each other. But were she free to-day, the separation that has already existed—long though it has been—would only serve to render our future union more blissful and complete. We have learned, by sad experience, the value of a love like ours, and we should know how to give it its fullest and widest expression. But oh! what a blank and chilly road lies before us now!

I drove her back to her hotel; we hardly spoke all the way; my heart was too full, and hers also, I think; though she did not know, as I did, that it was our last interview. It must be our last! Heaven help me to keep that resolution!

Susie was not at all impressed by the pathos of the situation; she babbled all the time, and thus, at all events, afforded us an excuse for our silence. At parting, one incident occurred that

may as well be recorded. I had shaken hands with Ethel, speaking a few words of farewell, and allowing her to infer that we might meet again on the morrow; then I turned to Susie, and gave her the kiss which I would have given the world to have had the right to press on her mother's lips. Ethel saw, and, I think, understood. She stooped quickly down, and laid her mouth where mine had been. Through the innocent medium of the child, our hearts met; and then I saw her no more.

May 3d.—Of course, it may not be true, probably it is not; mistakes are so easily made in the first moments of such horror and confusion; the dead come to life, and the living die. Or, at the worst, he may be only wounded or disabled. At all events, I decline to believe, save upon certain evidence, that the poor fellow has actually been killed. Were it to turn out so, I should feel almost like a murderer; for was not I writing, in this very journal, and perhaps at the very moment the accident occurred, that if my wish could send him to another world, I would not spare him?

Later.—I have read all the accounts in the newspapers this morning, and all agree in putting

Courtney's name among the killed. There can be no doubt about it any longer; he is dead. When the collision occurred, the car in which he was riding was thrown across the track, and the other train crashed through it. Judging by the condition of the body when discovered, death must have been nearly instantaneous. Poor Courtney! My conscience is not at ease. Of course, I am not really responsible; that is only imagination. But I begin to suspect that my imagination has been playing me more than one trick lately.

And now, with this new state of affairs so suddenly and terribly brought about, what is to be done? I am as yet scarcely in a condition to reflect calmly; but a voice within me seems to say that something else besides my conscience has been awakened by Courtney's death. Can it be that imagination, dallying with what it took for impossibilities, could so far mislead a man? Well, I shall start at once for the scene of the disaster, and relieve the poor fellow's widow of whatever pain I can. Ethel Courtney a widow! Ah, Ethel! Death sheds a ghastly light upon the idle vagaries of the human heart.

May 15th.—Denver, Colorado.—Magnificent weather and scenery; very different from my own mental scenery and mood at this moment. I am sorely out of spirits; and no wonder, after the reckless and insane emotion of the first days of this month. One pays for such indulgences at my age.

I have been re-reading the foregoing pages of this journal. Was I a fool or a coward, or was I merely intoxicated for eight-and-forty hours? At all events, Courtney's tragic end sobered me, and put what I had been doing in a true light. I am glad my insanity was not permitted to proceed farther than it did; but I have quite enough to reproach myself with as it is. So far as I have been able to explain the matter to myself, my prime error lay in attributing, in a world subject to constant change, too much permanence to a given state of affairs. The fact that Ethel was the wife of another man seemed to me so fixed and unalterable that I allowed my imagination to play with the picture of what might happen if that unalterable fact were altered. Secure in this fallacy, I worked myself up to the pitch of believing that I was actually and passionately in

love with a woman whose inaccessibility was, after all, her most winning attraction. Moreover, by writing down, in this journal, the events and words of the hours we spent together, I confirmed myself in my false persuasion, and probably imported into the record of what we said and did an amount of color and hidden significance that never, as I am now convinced, belonged to it in reality. Deluded by the notion that I was playing with a fancy, I was suddenly aroused to find myself imbrued in facts. The whole episode has profoundly humiliated me, and degraded me in my own esteem.

But I am not at the bottom of the mystery yet. Was I not in love with Ethel? Surely I was, if love be anything. Then why did I not ask her to marry me? Would she have refused me? No. That last look she gave me from under her black veil, when I told her I was going away. . . . Ah, no, she would not have refused me. Then why did I hesitate? Was not such a marriage precisely what I have always longed for? During all these seven years have I not been bewailing my bachelorhood, and wishing for an Ethel to cheer my solitary fireside with her gracious pres-

ence, to be interested in my work and hopes, to interest me in her wifely and maternal ways and aspirations? And when at last all these things were offered me, why did I shrink back and reject them?

Honestly, I can not explain it. Perhaps, if I had never loved her before, I might have loved her this time enough to unite my fate with hers. Or, perhaps—for I may as well speak plainly, since I am speaking to myself—perhaps, by force of habit, I had grown to love, better than love itself, those self-same forlorn conditions and dreary solitudes which I was continually lamenting and praying to be delivered from. What a dismal solution of the problem this would be were it the true one! It amounts to saying that I prefer an empty room, a silent hearth, an old pair of slippers, and a dressing-gown to the love and companionship of a refined and beautiful woman!—that I love even my own discomforts more than the comfort she would give me! It sounds absurd, scandalous, impossible; and yet, if it be not the literal truth, I know not what the truth is. It is amazing that an educated and intelligent man can live to be forty years old and still have come

to no better an understanding of himself than I had. Verily, as my old author said, thought is free, but nature is captive, and loveth her chain. Yes, my old author was right.

MY FRIEND PATON.

Mathew Morriss, my father, was a cotton merchant in Liverpool twenty-five years ago—a steady, laborious, clear-headed man, very affectionate and genial in his private intercourse. He was wealthy, and we lived in a sumptuous house in the upper part of the city. This was when I was about ten years old. My father was twice married; I was the child of the first wife, who died when I was very young; my stepmother came five years later. She was the elder of two sisters, both beautiful women. The sister often came to visit us. I remember I liked her better than I liked my stepmother; in fact, I regarded her with that sort of romantic attachment that often is developed in lads of my age. She had golden brown hair and a remarkably sweet voice,

and she sang and played in a manner that transported me with delight; for I was already devoted to music. She was of a gentle yet impulsive temperament, easily moved to smiles and tears; she seemed to me the perfection of womankind, and I made no secret of my determination to marry her when I grew up. She used to caress me, and look at me in a dreamy way, and tell me I was the nicest and handsomest boy in the world. "And as soon as you are a year older than I am, John," she would say, "you shall marry me, if you like."

Another frequent visitor at our house at this time was not nearly so much a favorite of mine. This was a German, Adolf Körner by name, who had been a clerk in my father's concern for a number of years, and had just been admitted junior partner. My father placed every confidence in him, and often declared that he had the best idea of business he had ever met with. This may very likely have been the fact; but to me he appeared simply a tall, grave, taciturn man, of cold manners, speaking with a slight German accent, which I disliked. I suppose he was about thirty-seven years of age, but I always

thought of him as older than my father, who was fifty. Another and more valid reason for my disliking Körner was that he was in the habit of paying a great deal of attention to my lady-love, Miss Juliet Tretherne. I used to upbraid Juliet about encouraging his advances, and I expressed my opinion of him in the plainest language, at which she would smile in a preoccupied way, and would sometimes draw me to her and kiss me on the forehead. Once she said, "Mr. Körner is a very noble gentleman; you must not dislike him." This had the effect of making me hate him all the more.

One day I noticed an unusual commotion in the house, and Juliet came down-stairs attired in a lovely white dress, with a long veil, and fragrant flowers in her hair. She got into a carriage with my father and stepmother, and drove away. I did not understand what it meant, and no one told me. After they were gone I went into the drawing-room, and, greatly to my surprise, saw there a long table covered with a white cloth and laid out with a profusion of good things to eat and drink in sparkling dishes and decanters. In the middle of the table was a great cake cov-

ered with white frosting; the butler was arranging some flowers round it.

"What is that cake for, Curtis?" I asked.

"For the bride, to be sure," said Curtis, without looking up

"The bride! who is she?" I demanded in astonishment.

"Your aunt Juliet, to be sure!" said Curtis, composedly, stepping back and contemplating his floral arrangement with his head on one side.

I asked no more, but betook myself with all speed to my room, locked the door, flung myself on the bed, and cried to heartbreaking with grief, indignation, and mortification. After a very long time some one tried the door, and a voice—the voice of Juliet—called to me. I made no answer. She began to plead with me; I resisted as long as I could, but finally my affection got the better of my resentment, and I arose and opened the door, hiding my tear-stained face behind my arm. Juliet caught me in her arms and kissed me; tears were running down her own cheeks. How lovely she looked! My heart melted, and I was just on the point of forgiving

her when the voice of Körner became audible from below, calling out "Mrs. Körner!" I tore myself away from her, and cried passionately, "You don't love me! you love him! go to him!" She looked at me for a moment with a pained expression; then she put her hand in the pocket of her dress and drew out something done up in white paper. "See what I have brought you, you unkind boy," said she. "What is it?" I demanded. "A piece of my wedding-cake," she replied. "Give it me!" said I. She put it in my hand; I ran forward to the head of the stairs, which Körner was just ascending, dashed the cake in his face, and then rushed back to my own room, whence neither threats nor coaxing availed to draw me forth for the rest of the day.

I never saw Juliet again. She and her husband departed on their wedding-trip that afternoon; it was to take them as far as Germany, for Körner said that he wished to visit his father and mother, who were still alive, before settling down permanently in Liverpool. Whether they really did so was never discovered. But, about a fortnight later, a dreadful fact came to light. Körner—the grave and reticent Körner, whom

everybody trusted and thought so highly of—was a thief, and he had gone off with more than half my father's property in his pocket. The blow almost destroyed my father, and my stepmother, too, for that matter, for at first it seemed as though Juliet must have been privy to the crime. This, however, turned out not to have been the case. Her fate must have been all the more terrible on that account; but no news of either of them ever came back to us, and my father would never take any measures to bring Körner to justice. It was several months before he recovered from the shock sufficiently to take up business again; and then the American Civil War came and completed his ruin. He died, a poor and broken-down man, a year later. My stepmother, who was really an admirable woman, realized whatever property remained to us, took a small house, and sent me to an excellent school, where I was educated for Cambridge. Meanwhile I had been devoting all possible time to music; for I had determined to become a composer, and I was looking forward, after taking my degree, to completing my musical education abroad; but my mother's health was precarious, and, when the

time came, she found herself unequal to making the journey, and the change of habits and surroundings that it implied. We lived very quietly in Liverpool for three or four years; then she died, and, after I had settled our affairs, I found myself in possession of a small income and alone in the world. Without loss of time I set out for the Continent.

I went to a German city, where the best musical training was to be had, and made my arrangements to pass several years there. At the banker's, when I went to provide for the regular receipt of my remittances, I met a young American, by name Paton Jeffries. He was from New England, and, I think, a native of the State of Connecticut; his father, he told me, was a distinguished inventor, who had made and lost a considerable fortune in devising a means of promoting sleep by electricity. Paton was studying to be an architect, which, he said, was the coming profession in his country; and it was evident, on a short acquaintance, that he was a fellow of unusual talents—one of those men of whom you say that, come what may, they are always sure to fall on their feet. For my part, I have certainly

never met with so active and versatile a spirit. He was a year or so older than I, rather tall than short, lightly but strongly built, with a keen, smiling, subtle face, a finely-developed forehead, light wavy hair, and gray eyes, very penetrating and bright. There was a pleasing kind of eagerness and volubility in his manner of talking, and a slight imperfection, not amounting to a lisp, in his utterance, which imparted a naïve charm to his speech. He used expressive and rapid gestures with his hands and arms, and there was a magnetism, a fascination, about the whole man that strongly impressed me. I was at that period much more susceptible of impressions, and prone to yield to them, than I am now. Paton's rattling vivacity, his knowledge of the world, his entertaining talk and stories, his curiosity, enterprise, and audacity, took me by storm; he was my opposite in temperament and character, and it seemed to me that he had most of the advantages on his side. Nevertheless, he professed, and I still believe he felt, a great liking for me, and we speedily came to an agreement to seek a lodging together. On the second day of our search, we found just what we wanted.

It was an old house, on the outskirts of the town, standing by itself, with a small garden behind it. It had formerly been occupied by an Austrian baron, and it was probably not less than two hundred years old. The baron's family had died out, or been dispersed, and now the venerable edifice was let, in the German fashion, in separate floors or *étages*, communicating with a central staircase. Some alterations rendered necessary by this modification had been made, but substantially the house was unchanged. Our apartment comprised four or five rooms on the left of the landing and at the top of the house, which consisted of three stories. The chief room was the parlor, which looked down through a square bow-window on the street. This room was of irregular shape, one end being narrower than the other, and nearly fitting the space at this end was a kind of projecting shelf or mantelpiece (only, of course, there was no fireplace under it, open fireplaces being unknown in Germany), upon which rested an old cracked looking-glass, made in two compartments, the frame of which, black with age and fly-spots, was fastened against the wall. The shelf was supported by two pilasters;

but the object of the whole structure was a mystery; so far as appeared, it served no purpose but to support the looking-glass, which might just as well have been suspended from a nail in the wall. Paton, I remember, betrayed a great deal of curiosity about it; and since the consideration of the problem was more in his line of business than in mine, I left it to him. At the opposite end of the room stood a tall earthenware stove. The walls were wainscoted five feet up from the dark polished floor, and were hung with several smoky old paintings, of no great artistic value. The chairs and tables were plain, but very heavy and solid, and of a dark hue like the room. The window was nearly as wide as it was high, and opened laterally from the center on hinges. The other rooms were of the same general appearance, but smaller. We both liked the place, and soon made ourselves very comfortable in it. I hired a piano, and had it conveyed upstairs to the parlor; while Paton disposed his architectural paraphernalia on and in the massive writing-table near the window. Our cooking and other household duties were done for us by the wife of the *portier*, the official corresponding to the French *concierge*, who, in

all German houses, attends at the common door, and who, in this case, lived in a couple of musty little closets opening into the lower hall, and eked out his official salary by cobbling shoes. He was an odd, grotesque humorist, of most ungainly exterior, black haired and bearded, with a squint, a squab nose, and a short but very powerful figure. Dirty he was beyond belief, and he was abominably fragrant of vile tobacco. For my part, I could not endure this fellow; but Paton, who had much more of what he called human nature in him than I had, established friendly relations with him at once, and reported that he found him very amusing. It was characteristic of Paton that, though he knew much less about the German language than I did, he could understand and make himself understood in it much better; and, when we were in company, it was always he who did the talking.

It would never have occurred to me to wonder, much less to inquire, who might be the occupants of the other *étages;* but Paton was more enterprising, and before we had been settled three days in our new quarters, he had gathered from his friend the portier, and from other sources, all

the obtainable information on the subject. The information was of no particular interest, however, except as regarded the persons who dwelt on the floor immediately below us. They were two—an old man and a young woman, supposed to be his daughter. They had been living here several years—from before the time, indeed, that the portier had occupied his present position. In all these years the old man was known to have been out of his room only twice. He was certainly an eccentric person, and was said to be a miser and extremely wealthy. The portier further averred that his property—except such small portion of it as was invested and on the income of which he lived—was realized in the form of diamonds and other precious stones, which, for greater security, he always carried, waking or sleeping, in a small leathern bag, fastened round his neck by a fine steel chain. His daughter was scarcely less a mystery than he, for, though she went out as often as twice or thrice a week, she was always closely veiled, and her figure was so disguised by the long cloak she wore that it was impossible to say whether she were graceful or deformed, beautiful or ugly. The balance of belief,

however, was against her being attractive in any respect. The name by which the old miser was known was Kragendorf; but, as the portier sagaciously remarked, there was no knowing, in such cases, whether the name a man bore was his own or somebody's else.

This Kragendorf mystery was another source of apparently inexhaustible interest to Paton, who was fertile in suggestions as to how it might be explained or penetrated. I believe he and the portier talked it over at great length, but, so far as I am aware, without arriving at any solution. I took little heed of the matter, being now fully absorbed in my studies; and it is to be hoped that Herr Kragendorf was not of a nervous temperament, otherwise he must have inveighed profanely against the constant piano-practice that went on over his head. I also had a violin, on which I flattered myself I could perform with a good deal of expression, and by and by, in the long, still evenings—it was November, but the temperature was still mild—I got into the habit of strolling along the less frequented streets, with my violin under my shoulder, drawing from it whatever music my heart desired. Occasionally

I would pause at some convenient spot, lean against a wall, and give myself up to improvisation. At such times a little cluster of auditors would gradually collect in front of me, listening for the most part silently, or occasionally giving vent to low grunts and interjections of approval. One evening, I remember, a young woman joined the group, though keeping somewhat in the background; she listened intently, and after a time gradually turned her face toward me, unconsciously as it were; and the light of a street-lamp at a little distance revealed a countenance youthful, pale, sad, and exquisitely beautiful. It impressed me as with a vague reminiscence of something I had seen or imagined—some pictured face, perhaps, caught in a glance and never to be identified. Her eyes finally met mine; I stopped playing. She started, gave me an alarmed look, and, gliding swiftly away, disappeared. I could not forget this incident; it haunted me strangely and persistently. Many a time thereafter I revisited the same spot, and drew together other audiences, but the delicate girl with the dark-blue eyes and the tender, sensitive mouth, was never again among them.

It was at this epoch, I think, that the inexhaustible Paton made a discovery. From my point of view it was not a discovery of any moment; but, as usual, he took interest in it enough for both of us. It appeared that, in attempting to doctor the crack in the old looking-glass, a large piece of the plate had got loose, and come away in his hands; and in the space behind he had detected a paper, carefully folded and tied up with a piece of faded ribbon. Paton was never in the habit of hampering himself with fine-drawn scruples, and he had no hesitation in opening the folded paper and spreading it out on the table. Judging from the glance I gave it, it seemed to be a confused and abstruse mixture of irregular geometrical figures and cramped German chirography. But Paton set to work upon it with as much concentration as if it had been a recipe for the Philosopher's Stone; he reproduced the lines and angles on fresh paper, and labored over the writing with a magnifying-glass and a dictionary. At times he would mutter indistinctly to himself, lift his eyebrows, nod or shake his head, bite his lips, and rub his forehead, and anon fall to work again with fresh vigor. At last he

leaned back in his chair, thumped his hand on the table, and laughed.

"Got it!" he exclaimed. "Say, John, old boy, I've got it! and it's the most curious old thing ever you saw in your life!"

"Something in analytical geometry, isn't it?" said I, turning round on my piano-stool.

"Analytical pudding's end! It's a plan of a house, my boy, and, what's more, of this very house we're in! That's a find, and no mistake! These are the descriptions and explanations—these bits of writing. It's a perfect labyrinth of Crete! Udolpho was nothing to it!"

"Well, I suppose it isn't of much value except as a curiosity?"

"Don't be too sure of that, John, my boy! Who knows but there's a treasure concealed somewhere in this house? or a skeleton in a secret chamber! This old paper may make our fortune yet!"

"The treasure wouldn't belong to us if we found it; and, besides, we can't make explorations beyond our own premises, and we know what's in them already."

"Do we? Did we know what was behind

the looking-glass? Did you never hear of sliding panels, and private passages, and concealed staircases? Where's your imagination, man? But you don't need imagination—here it is in black and white!"

As he spoke, he pointed to a part of the plan; but, as I was stooping to examine it, he seemed to change his mind.

"No matter," he exclaimed, suddenly folding up the paper and rising from his chair. "You're not an architect, and you can't be expected to go in for these things. No; there's no practical use in it, of course. But secret passages were always a hobby of mine. Well, what are you going to do this evening? Come over to the café and have a game of billiards!"

"No; I shall go to bed early to-night."

"You sleep too much," said Paton. "Everybody does. If my father, instead of inventing a way of promoting sleep, had invented a way of doing without it, he'd have been the richest man in America to-day. However, do as you like. I sha'n't be back till late."

He put on his hat and sallied forth with a cigar in his mouth. Paton was of rather a con-

vivial turn; he liked to have a good time, as he called it; and, indeed, he seemed to think that the chief end of man was to get money enough to have a good time continually, a sort of good eternity. His head was strong, and he could stand a great deal of liquor; and I have seen him sip and savor a glass of raw brandy or whisky as another man would a glass of Madeira. In this, and the other phases of his life about town, I had no participation, being constitutionally as well as by training averse therefrom; and he, on the other hand, would never have listened to my sage advice to modify his loose habits. Our companionship was apart from these things; and, as I have said, I found in him a good deal that I could sympathize with, without approaching the moralities.

That night, after I had been for some time asleep, I awoke and found myself listening to a scratching and shoving noise that seemed quite unaccountable. By-and-by it made me uneasy. I got up and went toward the parlor, from which the noise proceeded. On reaching the doorway, I saw Paton on his knees before one of the pilasters in the narrow end of the room; a candle

was on the floor beside him, and he was busily at work at something, though what it was I could not make out. The creak of the threshold under my foot caused him to look round. He started violently, and sprang to his feet.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" he said, after a moment. "Great Scott! how you scared me! I was—I dropped a bit of money hereabouts, and I was scraping about to find it. No matter—it wasn't much! Sorry I disturbed you, old boy." And, laughing, he picked up his candle and went into his own room.

From this time there was a change vaguely perceptible in our mutual relations; we chatted together less than before, and did not see so much of each other. Paton was apt to be out when I was at home, and generally sat up after I was abed. He seemed to be busy about something—something connected with his profession, I judged; but, contrary to his former custom, he made no attempt to interest me in it. To tell the truth, I had begun to realize that our different tastes and pursuits must lead us further and further apart, and that our separation could be only a question of time. Paton was a materialist,

and inclined to challenge all the laws and convictions that mankind has instituted and adopted; there was no limit to his radicalism. For example, on coming in one day, I found him with a curious antique poniard in his hands, which he had probably bought in some old curiosity shop. At first I fancied he meant to conceal it; but, if so, he changed his mind.

"What do you think of that?" he said, holding it out to me. "There's a solution of continuity for you! Mind you don't prick yourself! It's poisoned up to the hilt!"

"What do you want of such a thing?" I asked.

"Well, killing began with Cain, and isn't likely to go out of fashion in our day. I might find it convenient to give one of my friends—you, for instance—a reminder of his mortality some time. You'll say murder is immoral. Bless you, man, we never could do without it! No man dies before his time, and some one dies every day that some one else may live."

This was said in a jocose way, and, of course, Paton did not mean it. But it affected me unpleasantly nevertheless.

As I was washing my hands in my room, I happened to look out of my window, which commanded a view of the garden at the back of the house. It was an hour after sunset, and the garden was nearly dark; but I caught a movement of something below, and, looking more closely, I recognized the ugly figure of the portier. He seemed to be tying something to the end of a long slender pole, like a gigantic fishing-rod; and presently he advanced beneath my window, and raised the pole as high as it would go against the wall of the house. The point he touched was the sill of the window below mine—probably that of the bedroom of Herr Kragendorf. At this juncture the portier seemed to be startled at something—possibly he saw me at my window; at all events, he lowered his pole and disappeared in the house.

The next day Paton made an announcement that took me by surprise. He said he had made up his mind to quit Germany, and that very shortly. He mentioned having received letters from home, and declared he had got, or should soon have got, all he wanted out of this country. "I'm going to stop paying money for instruc-

tion," he said, "and begin to earn it by work. I shall stay another week, but then I'm off. Too slow here for me! I want to be in the midst of things, using my time."

I did not attempt to dissuade him; in fact, my first feeling was rather one of relief; and this Paton, with his quick preceptions, was probably aware of.

"Own up, old boy!" he said, laughing; "you'll be able to endure my absence. And yet you needn't think of me as worse than anybody else. If everybody were musicians and moralists, it would be nice, no doubt; but one might get tired of it in time, and then what would you do? You must give the scamps and adventurers their innings, after all! They may not do much good, but they give the other fellows occupation. I was born without my leave being asked, and I may act as suits me without asking anybody's leave."

This was said on a certain bright morning after our first fall of snow; the tiled roofs of the houses were whitened with it, it cushioned the window-sills, and spread a sparkling blankness over the garden. In the streets it was already

melting, and people were slipping and splashing on the wet and glistening pavements. After gazing out at this scene for a while, in a mood of unwonted thoughtfulness, Paton yawned, stretched himself, and declared his intention of taking a stroll before dinner. Accordingly he lit a cigar and went forth. I watched him go down the street and turn the corner.

An hour afterward, just when dinner was on the table, I heard an unusual noise and shuffling on the stairs, and a heavy knock on the door. I opened it, and saw four men bearing on a pallet the form of my friend Paton. A police officer accompanied them. They brought Paton in, and laid him on his bed. The officer told me briefly what had happened, gave me certain directions, and, saying that a surgeon would arrive immediately, he departed with the four men tramping behind him.

Paton had slipped in going across the street, and a tramway car had run over him. He was not dead, though almost speechless; but his injuries were such that it was impossible that he should recover. He kept his eyes upon me; they were as bright as ever, though his face was

deadly pale. He seemed to be trying to read my thoughts—to find out my feeling about him, and my opinion of his condition. I was terribly shocked and grieved, and my face no doubt showed it. By-and-by I saw his lips move, and bent down to listen.

"Confounded nuisance!" he whispered faintly in my ear. "It's all right, though; I'm not going to die this time. I've got something to do, and I'm going to do it—devil take me if I don't!"

He was unable to say more, and soon after the surgeon came in. He made an examination, and it was evident that he had no hope. His shrug of the shoulders was not lost upon Paton, who frowned, and made a defiant movement of the lip. But presently he said to me, still in the same whisper, "John, if that old fool should be right—he won't be, but in case of accidents—you must take charge of my things—the papers, and all. I'll make you heir of my expectations! Write out a declaration to that effect: I can sign my name; and he'll be witness."

I did as he directed, and having explained to the surgeon the nature of the document, I put the pen in Paton's hand; but was obliged to guide

his hand with my own in order to make an intelligible signature. The surgeon signed below, and Paton seemed satisfied. He closed his eyes; his sufferings appeared to be very slight. But, even while I was looking at him, a change came over his face—a deadly change. His eyes opened; they were no longer bright, but sunken and dull. He gave me a dusky look—whether of rage, of fear, or of entreaty, I could not tell. His lips parted, and a voice made itself audible; not like his own voice, but husky and discordant. "I'm going," it said. "But look out for me. . . . Do it yourself!"

"Der Herr ist todt" (the man is dead), said the surgeon the next minute.

It was true. Paton had gone out of this life at an hour's warning. What purpose or desire his last words indicated, there was nothing to show. He was dead; and yet I could hardly believe that it was so. He had been so much alive; so full of schemes and enterprises. Nothing now was left but that crushed and haggard figure, stiffening on the bed; nothing, at least, that mortal senses could take cognizance of. It was a strange thought.

Paton's funeral took place a few days afterward. I returned from the graveyard weary in body and mind. At the door of the house stood the portier, who nodded to me, and said,

"A very sad thing to happen, worthy sir; but so it is in the world. Of all the occupants of this house, one would have said the one least likely to be dead to-day was Herr Jeffries. Heh! if I had been the good Providence, I would have made away with the old gentleman of the *étage* below, who is of no use to anybody."

This, for lack of a better, was Paton's funeral oration. I climbed the three flights of stairs and let myself into our apartment—mine exclusively now. The place was terribly lonely; much more so than if Paton had been alive anywhere in the world. But he was dead; and, if his own philosophy were true, he was annihilated. But it was not true! How distinct and minute was my recollection of him—his look, his gestures, the tones of his voice. I could almost see him before me; my memory of him dead seemed clearer than when he was alive. In that invisible world of the mind was he not living still, and perhaps not far away?

I sat down at the table where he had been wont to work, and unlocked the drawers in which he kept his papers. These, or some of them, I took out and spread before me. But I found it impossible, as yet, to concentrate my attention upon them; I pushed back my chair, and, rising, went to the piano. Here I remained for perhaps a couple of hours, striking the vague chords that echo wandering thoughts. I was trying to banish this haunting image of Paton from my mind, and at length I partly succeeded.

All at once, however, the impression of him (as I may call it) came back with a force and vividness that startled me. I stopped playing, and sat for a minute perfectly still. I felt that Paton was in the room; that if I looked round I should see him. I however restrained myself from looking round with all the strength of my will—wherefore I know not. What I felt was not fear, but the conviction that I was on the brink of a fearful and unprecedented experience —an experience that would not leave me as it found me. This strange struggle with myself taxed all my powers; the sweat started out on my forehead. At last the moment came when I

could struggle no longer. I laid my hand on the keyboard, and pushed myself round on the stool. There was a momentary dazzle before my eyes, and after that I saw plainly. My hand, striking the keys, had produced a jarring discord; and while this was yet tingling in my ears, Paton, who was sitting in his old place at the table, with his back toward me, faced about in his chair, and his eyes met mine. I thought he smiled.

My excitement was past, and was succeeded by a dead calm. I examined him critically. His appearance was much the same as when in life; nay, he was even more like himself than before. The subtle or crafty expression which had always been discernible in his features was now intensified, and there was something wild and covertly fierce in the shining of his gray eyes, something that his smile was unable to disguise. What was human and genial in my former friend had passed away, and what remained was evil—the kind of evil that I now perceived to have been at the base of his nature. It was a revelation of character terrible in its naked completeness. I knew at a glance that Paton must always have been a

far more wicked man that I had ever imagined; and in his present state all the remains of goodness had been stripped away, and nothing but wickedness was left.

I felt impelled, by an impulse for which I could not account, to approach the table and examine the papers once more; and now it entered into my mind to perceive a certain method and meaning in them that had been hidden from me before. It was as though I were looking at them through Paton's intelligence, and with his memory. He had in some way ceased to be visible to me; but I became aware that he wished me to sit down in his chair, and I did so. Under his guidance, and in obedience to a will that seemed to be my own, and yet was in direct opposition to my real will, I began a systematic study of the papers. Paton, meanwhile, remained close to me, though I could no longer see him; but I felt the gaze of his fierce, shining eyes, and his crafty, evil smile. I soon obtained a tolerable insight into what the papers meant, and what was the scheme in which Paton had been so much absorbed at the time of his death, and which he had been so loath to abandon.

It was a wicked and cruel scheme, worked out to the smallest particular. But, though I understood its hideousness intellectually, it aroused in me no corresponding emotion; my sensitiveness to right and wrong seemed stupefied or inoperative. I could say, "This is wicked," but I could not awaken in myself a horror of committing the wickedness; and, moreover, I knew that, if the influence Paton was able to exercise over me continued, I must in due time commit it.

Presently I became aware, or, to speak more accurately, I seemed to remember, that there was something in Paton's room which it was incumbent on me to procure. I went thither, lifted up a corner of the rug between the bed and the stove, and beheld, in an aperture in the floor, of the existence of which I had till now known nothing, the antique poisoned dagger that Paton had showed me a few weeks before, and which I had not seen since then. I brought it back to the sitting-room, put it in a drawer of the table, and locked the drawer, at the same time making a mental note to the effect that I should reopen the drawer at a certain hour of the night and take the dagger out. All this while Paton was close

at hand, though not visible to sight; but I had a sort of inner perception of his presence and movements. All at once, at about the hour of sunset, I saw him again; he moved toward the looking-glass at the narrow end of the room, laid his hand upon one of the pilasters, glanced at me over his shoulder, and immediately seemed to stoop down. As I sat, the edge of the table hid him from sight. I stood up and looked across. He was not there; and a kind of reaction of my nerves informed me that he was gone absolutely, for the time.

This reaction produced a lassitude impossible to describe; it was overpowering, and I had no choice but to yield to it. I dropped back in my chair, leaned forward on the table, and instantly fell into a heavy sleep, or stupor.

I awoke abruptly, with a sensation as if a hand had been laid on my shoulder. It was night, and I knew that the hour I had noted in my mind was at hand. I opened the drawer and took out the dagger, which I put in my pocket. The house was quite silent. A shiver passed through me. I was aware that Paton was standing at the narrow end of the room, waiting for me: Yes—

there he was, or the impression of him in my brain—what did it matter? I arose mechanically and walked toward him. He had no need to direct me: I knew all there was to do, and how to do it. I knelt on the floor, laid my shoulder against the pilaster, and pushed it laterally. It moved aside on a pivot, disclosing an iron ring let into the floor. I laid hold of this ring, and lifted. A section of the floor came up, and I saw a sort of ladder descending perpendicularly into darkness. Down the ladder Paton went, and I followed him. Arrived at the bottom, I turned to the left, led by an instinct or a fascination; passed along a passage barely wide enough to admit me, until I came against a smooth, hard surface. I passed my hand over it until I touched a knob or catch, which I pressed, and the surface gave way before me like a door. I stumbled forward, and found myself in a room of what was doubtless Herr Kragendorf's apartment. A keen, cold air smote against my face; and with it came a sudden influx of strength and self-possession. I felt that, for a moment at least, the fatal influence of Paton upon me was broken. But what was that sound of a struggle—those cries and

gasps, that seemed to come from an adjoining room?

I sprang forward, opened a door, and beheld a tall old man, with white hair and beard, in the grasp of a ruffian whom I at once recognized as the portier. A broken window showed how he had effected his entrance. One hand held the old man by the throat; in the other was a knife, which he was prevented from using by a young woman, who had flung herself upon him in such a way as to trammel his movements. In another moment, however, he would have shaken her off.

But that moment was not allowed him. I seized him with a strength that amazed myself—a strength which never came upon me before or since. The conflict lasted but a breath or two; I hurled him to the floor, and, as he fell, his right arm was doubled under him, and the knife which he held entered his back beneath the left shoulder-blade. When I rose up from the whirl and fury of the struggle, I saw the old man reclining exhausted on the bosom of the girl. I knew him, despite his white hair and beard. And the face that bent so lovingly above him was the face that had looked into mine that night on the street—

the face of the blue-eyed maiden—of a younger and a lovelier Juliet! As I gazed, there came a thundering summons at the door, and the police entered.

. . . . . .

My poor uncle Körner had not prospered after his great stroke of roguery. His wife had died of a broken heart, after giving birth to a daughter, and his stolen riches had vanished almost as rapidly as they were acquired. He had at last settled down with his daughter in this old house. The treasure in the leathern bag, though a treasure to him, was not of a nature to excite general cupidity. It consisted, not of precious stones, but of relics of his dead wife—her rings, a lock of her hair, her letters, a miniature of her in a gold case. These poor keepsakes, and his daughter, had been the only solace of his lonely and remorseful life.

It was uncertain whether Paton and the portier had planned the robbery together, or separately, and in ignorance of each other's purpose. Nor can I tell whether my disembodied visitor came to me with good or with evil intent. Wicked spirits, even when they seem to have power to carry out their purposes, are perhaps

only permitted to do so, so far as is consistent with an overruling good of which they know nothing. Certainly, if I had not descended the secret passage, Körner would have been killed, and perhaps my Juliet likewise—the mother of my children. But should I have been led on to stab him myself, with the poisoned dagger, had the portier not been there? Juliet smiles and says No, and I am glad to agree with her. But I have never since then found that anniversary upon me, without a shudder of awe, and a dark thought of Paton Jeffries.

DOCTOR CARAJO'S PATIENT.

I.

Doctor Carajo sat in his verandah, smoking a cigar. His chair was a curious bamboo structure, of Japanese manufacture; and upon the carved stone balustrade beside him stood a goblet of Venetian glass half full of iced sherbet. The Doctor sat in the clear shadow, and gazed out meditatively upon a lovely prospect of semi-tropical sea and shore. His house, built in the Spanish style, stood on a height at the verge of the antique town—a town of narrow, irregular streets, and high-shouldered buildings, with projecting windows and arched doorways. It had not altered in hundreds of years, save to grow greyer, more indolent, and more venerable. Here

and there on the outskirts clusters of palm trees supported their dark waving plumes on delicate stems; to the right a great river merged slumbering into the sea. Across this scene the afternoon sun flung a broad mellow radiance, and breathings of delicious air came up with messages of coolness from the ocean.

In this lovely and forgotten spot Doctor Carajo had lived three years. Not every man could have made himself part of such a community without occasioning a good deal of excitement and remark: a stranger was nowhere so much a stranger as in that ancient town. But Doctor Carajo had ventured into the still and immemorial life of the place as quietly and unremarkably as a shadow of the evening. Quiet and reserved he was of manner, but he was in no sense an insignificant man. His forehead was white and high, with a peculiar fineness of modelling about the temples; thin black hair, slightly tinged with grey, grew in short curls about his head. His brows were heavy, his eyes deep set and black, with a clear, calm gaze, which never kindled into wrath or melted into tenderness. His nose was straight, with sensitive nostrils; his mouth and chin were

concealed by a heavy grey moustache and imperial. In figure he was slight, somewhat round-shouldered, and he had a grave, methodical way of walking, not devoid of unconscious dignity. In his bearing towards others he was courteous, but wholly cold and unimpassioned. His smile was rare, and slightly contemptuous. His voice was musical and low, but somewhat metallic; his speech brief, unhurried, and careless. He seemed not so much a man, with warm blood in his veins and living interests in his heart, as a serene and loveless abstraction of certain human qualities. Thus he came among the people of the old town unquestioned and, in a social sense, almost unobserved. He brought no wife with him, nor were there any female servants in his household. He never was known to seek a woman's company, nor to indicate by his demeanour any perception of difference of sex in those he met. On the other hand, as a man of learning, wealth, and great skill in his profession, his reputation in the community was unrivalled, and people consulted him as they might have consulted some wise volume containing infallible remedies for bodily ills. Doctor Carajo, in brief, held the position of a kind of physical

Providence, little thought about until he was needed, and then trusted implicitly. Professionally, he was known to everyone; personally, to none.

II

As Doctor Carajo sat smoking in his chair that sunny afternoon, the noise of a carriage proceeding up the street attracted his attention. Without altering his position, he allowed his eyes to rest upon the vehicle and its occupant. The latter was a woman, dressed in white, with a black lace mantilla thrown over her shoulders. She was in the prime of her youth and beauty, but her anxious and nervous manner showed evidences of acute distress of mind. As Doctor Carajo looked upon her, his eyes dilated and his face flushed; then he grew very pale. He leaned back in his chair as if to conceal himself from view, and remained for several moments motionless, save for his uneven breathing, and the tremulous grasp of his hands upon the arms of his chair. But when the wheels stopped before his door, and the bell sounded in

the court below, Doctor Carajo drew a longer and firmer breath, and sat erect. By the time the servant arrived with the information that a lady was below who desired to see him on a matter of life and death, he appeared no less serene and impressive than usual.

"Bring hither a chair for the lady," he said, and say that I await her."

Having given these directions, the Doctor rose from his chair and remained leaning negligently against the stone balustrade of the balcony, with his face towards the room which opened upon it. A short time elapsed—short, that is, by the watch, though how long it may have seemed to Doctor Carajo it is impossible to say. Then a rustle and a whiteness advancing through the darkness of the room announced the visitor's approach. As she set foot on the balcony, the Doctor bowed his head courteously.

"Doctor Carajo," she began, speaking abruptly and impetuously, "I was told to come to you—that no one but you could cure my husband——"

At that word, the Doctor raised his head, and looked his visitor in the face, while a faint,

contemptuous smile quivered for an instant beneath his grey moustache.

The lady stopped short, her beautiful lips apart, and her great eyes fixed in a gaze of seeming amazement or dismay. Presently she muttered some unintelligible words, raised her hands across her bosom with a gesture of fear or of repulsion, and her face and neck crimsoned with a hot blush.

The Doctor contemplated her for a few moments, and then said coldly, "Be seated, madam. Your husband, you were about to say——?"

"I should not have come—they said Doctor Carajo——"

"You were rightly informed, madam. I am Doctor Carajo, and I alone can cure your husband —if he be curable. You may place every confidence in me."

"Oh, what shall I do?" murmured the lady, pressing her hands over her face. She stood dizzily, and would have fallen, had not the Doctor, by a light touch, guided her to a chair. She sank down, a tremor passed through her body, and her eyes closed.

"You appear yourself to be indisposed, madam," observed the Doctor. "The heat outside is great.

and you have over-exerted yourself. This scent will revive you;" and as he spoke he held to her nostrils a small phial containing a pungent perfume. "You ask me what you should do," he continued. "You should, in my opinion, lose no time in telling me the circumstances to which I owe your visit. If your husband's case is so precarious, as I am given to understand, a delay might prove fatal."

"Would you not be more fatal than any delay?" demanded the lady, fixing her eyes upon him.

"You are scarcely complimentary," returned the Doctor, with a smile. "I would do my best for him, as for any other human creature entrusted to my care. Nevertheless, if you deem it best to seek assistance elsewhere—you should know me enough to know that I leave you free to do what you will."

"Yes, I know you in that speech," exclaimed the lady, in a low but passionate tone. "You would leave me free—too free. You say you would do your best for any human creature left to your care; but the human soul entrusted to your care you would leave free to fall into temptation

and be destroyed! But, perhaps, God will be more merciful than you think."

"I will not say I am surprised at your attacking me, madam," said the Doctor quietly; "but I cannot pretend that, under the circumstances, I understand it."

A brief silence ensued; then the lady leaned forward, her hands clasped on her knees, and her face raised towards Doctor Carajo, who still remained leaning negligently against the balustrade of the balcony.

"I am at your mercy," she said; "and even such a revenge as yours should be satisfied to see me here imploring your help. I take all the blame of what has been upon myself. But no punishment you could inflict on me could be half so humiliating as this which I inflict on myself. I ask you to save him! In asking it, I give my life for his; for, after such a degradation, life would be a burden and a shame. If you have been waiting all these years for a chance to wreak your hatred on me, your time is come. It will never come again!"

The wild and reckless emphasis of this appeal, enhanced by the hushed voice in which it was

spoken, seemed to have some effect upon Doctor Carajo. He stroked his grey moustache and meditated a little.

"Do you love this—husband of yours, madam?" he finally inquired.

"Enough to beg his life at your hands," she answered, sinking on her knees.

"As a physician," continued Doctor Carajo, "I have my professional customs. While always ready to exercise my skill in behalf of human suffering, I demand in return certain equivalents. From some, one thing; from some, another; money but seldom, for I am wealthy; but I compel my patients to feel that, when the cure is effected, we are but quits. I have already told you that it will give me pleasure to attempt the relief of your husband; but I omitted to mention the equivalent. Are you prepared to give it?"

"Anything—even my life!"

"Not your life, by any means. I shall merely require you, as soon as he is restored to health, to leave this town, never to return. You will leave it alone, concealing from your husband your route and your destination. Never henceforth will you either see him or hold any manner of communication with him. Do you agree?"

The lady had risen to her feet, and was pressing one hand over her heart. Her eyes searched Doctor Carajo's countenance with terrible intensity. "Will you fulfil your part of the contract?" she demanded.

"I will," he replied.

Her bosom rose and fell rapidly, her face quivered, and was now pale, now red. At last she said with a gasp, as if the words tore her life up by the roots, "Then I consent. God hear me, and judge between us!"

"Be it so," rejoined the Doctor gravely. "And now, if you please, I will accompany you to your husband. On the way, you will inform me as to his ailment. He shall be brought to my house, and you shall witness my treatment of him. Afterwards——" he made a significant gesture. The lady moved her head in assent. But as they left the balcony, a thought struck her, and she turned again.

"You will not let him know that you—are——?"

"I will let him know that I am Doctor Carajo, madam," said the other, bowing coldly, and making way for her to pass.

III.

Doctor Carajo's private room was as cool, as quiet, and as secluded as the Doctor himself. The floor was of fine Pompeian mosaic, partly covered with rugs of delicately-woven Indian matting. The lower part of the walls was of yellow marble, relieved with black; above were panels of rich woods, highly polished. The ceiling was vaulted, and contained a window of stained glass, in the nature of a skylight. At one end of the room was a deep alcove, across the entrance to which was suspended a screen or veil of some soft silken fabric, through which the interior of the room could be seen, though the observer could himself be invisible. Large-leaved plants stood here and there in marble vases; low chairs and tables were placed in convenient positions; and in the centre of the chamber was a broad couch or ottoman, cushioned, and draped with the finest cambric. At the end opposite the alcove was a small water-jet, playing with a tinkling sound through the mouth of a bronze lion's head into a marble basin attached to

the wall. A delicious coolness and fragrance pervaded the apartment, which was entirely removed from all outside noises and influences.

Three persons were present in this room—Doctor Carajo, the lady, and a man who lay at full length upon the couch. He was tall and powerfully formed, with broad shoulders and massive limbs. His features expressed strength and vigour; too rugged to be called handsome, but full of masculine pith and ability. A thick brown beard covered the lower part of his face; his eyes were closed, and he lay in an apparent lethargy. Upon his forehead and on his arms, which were bare, appeared a number of small spots or blotches, of a purplish hue. But for a slight intermittent movement of the chest, indicating a subdued respiration, the man might have been supposed to be dead.

"The opiate will exhaust its effect in a few minutes," observed Doctor Carajo, bending over his patient and eyeing him critically. "From this time the active phase of the case begins. The poison has thus far made itself perceptible only by a superficial heat and stinging. It will now lay hold on the interior parts of the

organism; there will be little or no pain, but more danger."

"How long will this last?" asked the lady, who had now assumed a demeanour outwardly as quiet and self-possessed as the Doctor's own.

"We may expect three separate stages," the Doctor answered, "extending over several hours. The patient will retain his faculties, but their action will be modified in a peculiar manner in each of the three stages. As the poison strikes more and more deeply inward, you will notice a corresponding alteration in——ah! he begins to awake."

"Is there any hope?" asked the lady.

"The poison is one of the most insidious and deadly known to science, and also one of the rarest," the Doctor replied. "Probably few men besides myself know how to deal with it at all. The strong vital power of the patient is in his favour; on the other hand, too long a time elapsed before the treatment began. I have an antidote here which, had it been given immediately, would have overcome the evil."

"And how, should you give it now?" demanded the lady.

"It would still counteract the poison, but at the expense of the patient's life. He has not now the strength to undergo the necessary struggle."

"What shall you do?"

"I shall administer drugs which will have the double effect of increasing the vital power, and weakening the action of the poison. Human skill can do no more. Hush! he will open his eyes in another moment. He must not be aware of your presence. Step into that alcove, and make no sound. You can there see all that passes. Let nothing that he may say induce you to discover yourself, unless I give you the sign."

The lady moved to the side of the couch, bent quickly, and kissed the forehead of the half-conscious man, and then drew back and vanished behind the curtain of the alcove.

IV.

The man drew a deep and quick breath, moved slightly on his cushions, and opened his eyes. His glance wandered round the room, and passed over Doctor Carajo several times before seeming to take

note of him. When at length it centred upon him, the man said, in a deep and resonant voice, "You are my physician, I suppose? I feel better —free from pain, and more strength; thanks to your skill, no doubt. How soon do you promise to have me up again?"

"It is now six o'clock in the morning," said Doctor Carajo. "By this noon, at furthest, the crisis will have passed."

"The crisis! Humph! Then I'm not out of danger yet? Tell me the truth, Doctor; I'm not afraid to hear it. Death or life—which is it?"

"Since you have chosen to ask, I will reply," said the Doctor, after a pause. "You may live; but it is more probable that you will die."

"Humph! Well, such is life—and death! I have lived—I have been alive—as much as most men. And this is to be the end? The end! a strange idea, that!" He was silent a moment or two, and then said, "Where is Lenore?"

A slight contraction overshadowed the Doctor's brow, and passed away again.

"I presume you refer to your wife?" he said.

"Certainly—the woman I love—my wife, if there's any meaning in words. Where is she?"

"It was indispensable, for her sake and your own, that she should remain apart from you for the present. She will be summoned as soon as safety will allow—or as soon as hope vanishes."

"Poor darling! what would become of her were I to go!" muttered the patient, half to himself. "I must tighten my grip for her sake. Not die! no—no! She gave herself to me, body and soul, and I must stand by her to the end. There, again—the end! Is this it? It isn't what I expected. Me to die, and she to live on? it mustn't be! my darling—my Lenore! What a life we have had these three years past; what a love! Never a day's shadow; never a regret. Ha! Doctor, you are there, aren't you?—and I've probably been thinking aloud, as my habit is. Well, I like your face: you're a cold man, but an honest one. You may hear whatever comes; and maybe 'twould be as well to make you my father-confessor out and out! You're as honest as any jack-priest of 'em all—eh, Doctor?"

"I have never betrayed the confidence of man or woman," said Doctor Carajo, quietly.

"Humph! Well, I am myself indifferently honest, as the world goes, but I can't speak quite

so fair of myself as that. But 'tis society saps our principles. What law is so strong as the love of a man for a woman? and the strongest must win. Sin and virtue are a matter of words—be the responsibility his who utters them, and the suffering his who believes them. The wise man knows he is free, and that life is short, and the fire of youth burns but once. The treasure belongs to him who can keep it; vain to buy it with money, or bind it with cords or with vows. It will go where it belongs, and there 'tis safe."

"What, then, do you hold love to be?" inquired Doctor Carajo.

"I hold love to be—all that my blood and marrow, my flesh and pulses, and my five senses, tell me that it is: the delight of a man in what is strange, yet familiar; like, yet unlike; man, yet woman; forbidden, yet allowed. Love is passion—incarnate happiness; a surrender that is victory; to receive by giving; the generosity of selfishness; a fire that creates by consuming; a madness that is wisdom. It is the inarticulate language that transcends all languages—the sweet speech of flesh to flesh. There's a string of paradoxes for you, Doctor, whereof you will comprehend nothing.

Nor do I myself, for the matter of that; I only know that the look and touch of a certain woman will take a certain man captive, body and bones; and that the more he is captive, the better he likes it. That was my case. I found a treasure, made for me to enjoy; 'twas said another man owned it, but I knew naught of him. If it were his, he would have kept it. I have proved my right to it; and if it were to take over again, I would take it!"

"Love, therefore, is wholly a physical matter?" said Doctor Carajo, with a smile.

"Yes: and yet, by that inspiration man has invented poetry, and the soul, and heaven, and all manner of the like glorious hallucinations. Love cannot die, we say; no—nor will the sun ever cease to warm the cold, or water to refresh the thirsty. But neither sun, nor water, nor love itself will animate the dead; so what is one more than the other?"

"Surely a convincing argument," remarked Doctor Carajo, still smiling, and with a glance towards the curtained alcove. "And lovers parted on earth are parted for ever. The only wonder is that, for so slight a cause, a man should compro-

mise himself so deeply. The world is wider than a woman's arms; and power, learning, and revenge are sweeter than her kiss."

"I have not found them so," replied the other, closing his eyes.

A long silence followed, during which Doctor Carajo's patient seemed to lie in a half-waking dream. The physician watched him carefully. At times he sprinkled his face with a certain volatile essence, fanning him the while with a long-handled fan of white owl's feathers; once or twice he made him swallow a powder of a reddish colour. The fountain plashed in its marble basin, and the rainbow lights from the stained glass window moved slowly along the walls and across the floor, and the flowers in their vases gave out their perfume. And all this time Doctor Carajo kept his face averted from the alcove, whence came no sound nor movement.

When, at length, the patient opened his eyes once more, a change was manifest in his appearance. His pallor was great, so that a white gleam seemed to rest upon his face; his features were sharper; blue veins showed through the skin of his forehead, and his eyes were sunken and

brilliant. His voice had lost its depth and strength, but was clearer and more penetrating than before. The expression of his countenance was composed and meditative.

"Where is Lenore?"

"Her time has not yet come," replied the Doctor.

"My mind beholds her clearly," rejoined the other. "My thoughts dwell with her, and commune with her own. In that sympathy of mind all love consists. Without it, the blind passion of the heart and the senses is misleading and mischievous. They are the force, but intellect is the guide; and when their force is gone, the intellect remains true to its choice. The delight of love is in the perception of its harmonies; and age, sickness, or absence has no power to obscure it."

"Then, were you to see Lenore no more, it would not disturb you?" asked the Doctor.

"Bodily presence is not without its uses," answered the other calmly. "To be a king, you must have a subject; and the body is the subject of the mind. By ruling it, the mind realizes and confirms its aims and conclusions; and, on the other hand, the body, by its suggestions and

limitations, sets the mind in motion and gives it strength. Without the body, love would be a dream; as, without the mind, it would be but a sensual and promiscuous instinct. Nevertheless, love having once attained bodily incarnation, I conceive that thenceforth the actual association together of the lovers is of secondary importance; though, perhaps, the mind needs to be refreshed occasionally by renewed intercourse with its mate, providing it with fresh incidents and developments to consider and interpret."

"Your philosophy is certainly persuasive," observed Doctor Carajo. "But, from this point of view, what think you of the so-called sanctity of the marriage bond?"

"It is an ingenious device for the preservation of outward social order," said the other, "but not in itself worthy of an intellectual man's respect. The laws of the mind are evidently above the control of social laws. Were all men ruled, as they ought to be, by the intellect, bonds of any kind, marriage or other, would cease to be. Households would still exist, and families would be reared; but the free intercourse of mind with mind, with all that that implies, would be

admitted, and, as a consequence, the passion of jealousy would vanish along with other relics of barbarism. In other words, marriage based upon intellectual sympathy would no longer be checked by marriages of merely material convenience; and immorality would disappear with the artificial morality which has created it.

"A desirable consummation, indeed," remarked Doctor Carajo. "And so you would, without repugnance, behold Lenore in possession of another of more sympathetic intellectual endowments than yourself?"

"The question seems a fair one," returned the other doubtfully; "but I have, perhaps, omitted some essential point in my analysis. Allowing the possibility that such an intellect as you suppose might exist, I still cannot conceive him as having rights over Lenore. The fact that we have belonged to each other has created between us something that did not exist before, and which cannot be removed; something neither physical nor intellectual, yet more substantial than either. I confess it perplexes me, and my mind is weary. I must rest awhile before considering it further."

And even as he spoke, he sank into a lethargy.

V.

THE interval between this stage and the final one lasted but a few minutes, but was marked by an even greater change in the aspect of the patient. The bodily substance of the man seemed in great measure to have sunk away and become translucent; he was not so much a physical object as a spiritual presence. The light in his eyes had the appearance of proceeding from some source beyond matter, and to see things which material sight has no cognizance of. At times a slight trembling passed through him, as if his body were shaken by the effort of some inward power to break away from its imprisonment. His voice, reduced almost to a whisper, nevertheless thrilled upon the ear with a distinctness and force that outdid the noisiness of the sturdiest lungs.

"Lenore!" he exclaimed commandingly, "come to me!"

"Hush!" said Doctor Carajo, with a frown. "She is not here."

"She is behind that veil," returned the other; "let her come forth."

At first there was no response to this summons; but by-and-by the curtain was grasped from within and slowly drawn aside. In the opening appeared the figure of Lenore, white in face and figure, like a ghost obeying a ghostly mandate. As her glance met that of Doctor Carajo's patient, she faltered, and uttered a low cry.

"You are dying, my love!" she said; "he has killed you!"

"By no means!" said Doctor Carajo sullenly. "At this moment I would buy his life with my own. Human skill has done its utmost."

"Do not come too near!" murmured Lenore's lover, as she advanced towards him. "We have no time to lose!"

"Am I not yours? Do you not love me?" she cried, in a voice weighted with unshed tears, and holding out her hands to him.

"There is a spiritual barrier between us," he said. "Do not let your fleshly hand disregard it. It seemed to me that I loved you; it seems so still But there has never been a true union between you and me. The license of the body, the arro-

gant insanity of the intellect—these parody love, and banish it. Can happiness be founded on murder? and we murdered marriage, Lenore!"

"But I never loved him—nor he me!" she said passionately. And then, with a sweeping gesture of the arm, she pointed to Doctor Carajo. "That is the man! Let him answer if what I say is not true."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders. "The question is a futile one," he said. "Sin, like God, is no respecter of persons. Take it, if you will, that I was justly served; her responsibility towards the covenant she broke is the same, and thereby she is condemned. But I deprecate this discussion, and the foolish revelation which occasioned it. If I ever were the person she asserts, I have long ceased to be so. His name and his heart—be it good or evil—are mine no more. I am plain Doctor Carajo, a man of science, and an observer."

"Your heart is at least the same in its coldness and revengefulness!" said Lenore bitterly.

"Coldness! I loved you!" exclaimed Doctor Carajo, with sudden and strange vehemence. "I tried to win your love, but you withheld it. Mine

was no surface passion, to be expressed with a flow of words and protestations; and because I could not speak, you thought me indifferent. Then, in my absence, you met this man, and betrayed me. I would not condescend to pursue you and supplicate you, or to seek a vulgar vengeance. I left you to the retribution of time and change. And this hour rewards me."

"Can such love as ours be wrong?" demanded Lenore, turning to her lover. "Is it not its own justification?"

"No, Lenore; nor must we seek justification," answered the dying man. "We have polluted the sacred symbol which is the image of creation. As light is married to heat, form to substance, and truth to goodness, so is man married to woman. The sanctity of that union is above and independent of individual conditions. For the sake of one selfish pleasure, should we oppose and defy a law in which are bound up the purity and welfare of mankind? or should we say that, because this man fails to be a worthy husband, we may violate the warrant whereof he, whether worthy or not, is the representative?"

"If the love that, for these three years past, has

been my life, be wickedness," said Lenore, "then why should I desire truth and goodness?"

"The love which opposes love of humanity is, in its essence, not love, but hatred," the dying man answered. "It is with such love that we heretofore loved each other; it is grounded in mortality, and must pass away. But there is something in us that outlasts the strength of the body and the pride of intellect—a soul which cannot die, and whose love is real and immortal. My soul, which until now I have never known or acknowledged, is now awake, and fills the place of death: it is I!"

"And do you love me still?" asked Lenore.

"Whether it be a new profanation or a promise, I love you still," he murmured; "nay, I have never truly loved you until this moment."

"We shall meet hereafter," she said.

"Let not your heart imagine it," he replied: "the wages of sin is not immortal happiness. Pray only that he whom we have chiefly wronged be less a sufferer thereby than we ourselves."

"Let not that disturb you," said Doctor Carajo gloomily. "If what this dying man has said be true—and it may be so, for aught I can tell—you have injured each other more fatally than you have

injured me. I ask no more. Heaven may promise you what happiness it will; I shall not cross you there."

"Farewell, Lenore!" said her lover, in a tone whose solemnity overawed its tenderness.

"Must I stay here alone?" she cried out in agony. "Let me go with you!"

"Not so! Rejoice, rather, that your road of retribution lies in this world. As for me, I go to a strange country, whose ways and boundaries no man knows."

There was a silence. "He is gone!" muttered Doctor Carajo, turning away.

But Lenore pressed her hands over her heart.

"He is here!" said she.

A STRANGE FRIEND.

Chapter I.

Some time ago I visited, in the interest of one of our magazines, a remote district of New England. It was early in October; the woods had just begun their season of splendour. My business led me beyond the immediate region of the railway; and for several days I travelled amidst scenes which the lapse of a generation or two have scarcely altered. This was all the more agreeable to me, inasmuch as I had spent the greater part of the previous twelve years in Europe, where even the wilder places have been so exhaustively handled and examined as to convey the impression of a sort of moral populousness in their very solitudes. But New England, ancient though she be in the annals of our Republic, has yet some spots almost

virgin so far as tourists are concerned. They lie outside of the main lines of travel, but this is probably not the chief cause of their immunity. It is rather to be sought in a certain outward sternness and severity of contour. There are no imposing mountains, no richly picturesque valleys, no mighty cataracts or burnished lakes. The grass, save for a month or two in the early summer, is brown and dry; the hard bones of granite emerge through the soil; the low hills are densely wooded with pine, birch, and oak, save where the wood-cutters have left rectangular clearings, diversified with regular piles of corded timber. The farm-houses are not the cottages of romance, but square-framed houses, as plain as shingles and clapboards can make them, and either painted white, or wearing the cold grey livery bestowed by sun and rain and snow. There are no green lanes winding between hedges through fat pastures, but sandy or clayey highways, dusty and muddy by turns, stretching bare and barren between fences of unhewn stone or chestnut rails. There are no mossy milestones, inscribed with undecipherable figures, but at the intersection of the ways a wooden post with two or more white arms radiating

from its top, bearing some such legend as "Pinefield 5 m.," "Waterbridge 12 m." In a word, this is the characteristic scenery of bleak and uncompromising New England, possessing the external reserve and rudeness reflected in the inhabitants, but, nevertheless, owning elements of beauty and charm which appear when rightly entreated.

I have incidentally mentioned Pinefield; and, in fact, it was by seeing that name upon one of the sign-posts above described that I was reminded of the village so designated. For some reason or other, I had not before realized that I was in its vicinity. It is true I had not been there since my college days, some time during the Civil War; and though I had become very familiar with it at that epoch, and had not infrequently recalled it since then, it had become invested in my memory with a certain indistinct, traditionary atmosphere, such as might be supposed to belong to a place one had read of rather than lived in. Now that I found myself within a few miles of it, however, my recollections became more clear and circumstantial; and it was not long before I made up my mind to pay it a visit. It did not lie

within the itinerary marked out for me; but neither was it far out of the way; and it may as well be confessed that some faint traces of a sentimental reminiscence were not without their weight in confirming my resolve.

But I perceive the necessity of explaining how it happened that a youth engaged in cultivating his mind and not allowing it to be ferocious at Harvard University should have found himself in a hamlet so far removed from the shadow of his Alma Mater as Pinefield. Be it known, then, that a desire on my part to investigate other branches of knowledge and experience besides (and occasionally, perhaps, instead of) those specified in the college catalogue, had prompted the president and faculty to suspend—as the phrase was—for a term or two my personal relations with the college recitation-rooms. In order to carry their decree into effect, they troubled themselves to assign me a place of residence considerably beyond a walking distance from Cambridge; and since the town of Pinefield possessed, in addition to this recommendation, a Unitarian minister who was an excellent classical and mathematical scholar, and who was to have charge of my intellectual prosperity, I was

considered to be very well disposed of. The Rev. Josiah Willard was this good gentleman's name. I am ashamed to remember that he soon familiarized himself to my inner consciousness as Old Josh. He was as good, as guileless, and as absent-minded a little gentleman as ever I have met with, and my affection for him (despite my irreverence) was more cordial than he ever suspected. He taught me much more and much better things than he ever suspected, too; but, if he imagined that he taught me Greek and algebra, I fear he flattered both himself and me. I learned from him how kind and simple and self-abnegating and childlike a learned Unitarian minister can be. But when I came downstairs to recite my lessons (I boarded in his house), and he had laid aside, with a friendly smile and greeting, the book or the manuscript on which he was engaged, it was his pupil's custom, by some carefully-devised question or remark, to launch him out upon one or other of the many topics that had a more intimate interest for him than schoolboys' tasks. Then he would fix the bright gaze of his pleasant round eyes upon a certain point of the ceiling, holding his head sidewise like a bird; cross one foot over his knee, and smooth

down his instep with his hand, while his discourse ran fluently and discursively on until the hour of our collaboration had almost passed away. Then, with an "Oh! oh! dear me! dear me!" he would catch up the text-book, pull out his watch, and exclaim, "Well, now, I suppose you must know all about this—yes, yes, I see—it's very simple; didn't find any difficulty, did you? Well, now you see our time is about up; suppose you read up to this paragraph to-morrow, and then we'll do a bit of good hard work together." And so his pupil would take his departure, assured that to-morrow would be twin sister to to-day. He was a little brown beaming man—brown eyes, brown hair and beard, brown clothes, except on Sundays; and very apt to fall into what I should call brown studies, except that there was never anything gloomy or morose about them.

The Reverend Josiah was a widower; but he had a beloved daughter—Elsie. When I knew her, Elsie could not have been more than fourteen years old, but she seemed older to me; not that she was tall; I think she was rather smaller than the average, gracefully and neatly formed, and tapering delicately off at the tip of her arch (not

arched) nose, and supple fingers and brisk slender feet. If you asked her a question she would throw up her head with something of that sidewise turn that characterized her father, letting her laughing dark eyes pass from yours to a point just beyond and above you, and then she would draw in her breath between her parted lips in a deliberative sort of way, and seemed to ponder your inquiry for a moment, and then, with a sudden bright glance into your eyes, and, in nine cases out of ten, a quick merry laugh, she would toss you a roguish answer. This was hard enough to withstand; but it was when she was serious that Elsie was most formidable. Ah me! what an expression she could call up in those dark eyes of hers, as perchance, she walked home with you from church in the evening, with her little hand resting its sensitive finger-tips on your arm. Such an ingenuous expression as it was and so trusting, so appreciating, so exploring—as if she could never see or hear too much of you! Of course you knew that she would be laughing at you the next day or the next minute, but that only involved matters the more. Had Elsie been forty instead of fourteen, she could not have been more completely the

superior at all points of the unbaked college youth who bamboozled her guileless father, and thought himself wiser than the faculty. There was more strength in my little finger than in Elsie's whole body, but there was more sense in her little finger —and what a very little finger it was!—than in a dozen such heads as mine. Nevertheless—or therefore, of course—I never was her lover. She had too much sense to desire it, and quite sense enough to prevent it. She made me believe at the time that it was my own reserve and pride that were keeping me aloof, but I realized afterwards that the true reason of my backwardness was much less soothing to my self-esteem. Elsie's schemes for her future never did include or could have included me. Meanwhile we became in time—and thanks to her tact—very good friends, as such friendships go; and if she remembered me a tenth part so long as I remembered her I had no reason to complain.

All this seemed very long ago as I drove along the road to Pinefield, in the buggy which I had hired for ten days at Plymouth, New Hampshire. It was a pleasant drive, not only because the yellow and crimson of the autumnal trees were so

acceptable to my unaccustomed eyes, but because there was just enough of agreeable anticipation in the visit that was before me—just enough and not too much. To see again places and people one has not seen for twenty years—what better entertainment can a meditative mind desire? You see not the place and people merely, but the old life you lived with them, and your own youthful self living it. The joys you felt at that time, which then were so keen, do not wear the same sparkle now; and those poignant sorrows and despairs—where are their gloom and blackness? But the picture is all the more mellow and pleasing on that account; it has toned down, it has gained an atmosphere, like the works of the Old Masters; it is not crude life itself, but the real objects before you are as a medium through which you see the softened vision of the life of long ago. As you stroll about and gaze and pause and remember, you are leading two existences at once, and each bestows upon the other an imaginative charm of unreality.

Such were my reflections as I drove leisurely along the road towards Pinefield, and finally surmounted the gradual, low acclivity from which, as

I knew, the village would come into view. Yes, there it was—the same cluster of white patches, with the broad main street stretching between them, and the white church steeple culminating in the midst. There was the elm-tree at the entrance of the town, shaped like an overflowing champagne glass—one of the old-fashioned tall kind, such as are not made now. There was the hotel, which has certainly had a new coat of paint since I saw it last; but the same wooden Corinthian columns as of yore dignify the portico, and the adjoining horse-sheds look neither more nor less tumble-down than ever. There is Moore's farm-house—but that has had an addition built on it, and a covered verandah across the front gives it a modern aspect. There is Fielding's, too; but it looks somewhat dingy; probably Tom has not got on in the world quite so well as he expected. And there, aye, there is the dwelling of the Reverend Josiah Willard; bless me how natural it looks! Even the window of the room which used to be mine, half open, as I generally had it. Is that old Josh himself on the doorstep? No; that is not his brisk gait and bearing; it is some much older man. And yet, now that I come to think of it, how old

must Josh be by this time? And—Elsie, can twenty added to fourteen make thirty-four? Impossible! For if that were so, then instead of a boy of eighteen, I should be——!—Away with such thoughts!

But, alas! Time has a logic with which, every now and again, one is obliged to reckon. It is one thing to note the gentle passage of years upon the face of nature; another to behold their sad traces upon the countenances of our friends. There are grey hairs in my own beard; and, therefore, the boys and girls whom I have been imagining unchanged are grown-up people; the slender girls are plump matrons or bony old maids; the mischievous boys are hard-visaged men of business; some of them are select-men; one is in the State Legislature; one, perhaps, in gaol. Moreover, those persons who were middle-aged in my day are now, without exception, white-haired and decrepit—those of them, at least, who are not resting in yonder burying-ground, which certainly is far more populous than when I saw it last; and there has come into existence a whole new creation of young people, who can no more remember what happened here twenty years ago than I can remember

whether it rained in London the day Warren Hastings was acquitted. How hackneyed all this vein of reflection is; and how strange and pathetic—when it comes livingly home to your own heart! How complacently do we see funerals passing us in the streets; nay, with what fortitude do we, by practice, contrive to attend the funerals of our friends! But when it comes to seeing our own wives and children nailed up in the coffin by the deft undertaker—and when it comes to being nailed up in it ourselves—then these familiar little ceremonies have their revenge upon us. These considerations, suddenly obtruding themselves upon me, caused me to slacken the pace of my not too impatient steed, and even to ask myself whether it would not be wiser to turn round and go back to that sign-board which had informed me that Pinefield was five miles. But there is a moral *vis inertiæ* which inclines us to consummate an enterprise which is already on the verge of completion. It might be disappointing to go on; but, on the other hand, the road was downhill; it was an effort to change one's mind, and I was conscious of a considerable curiosity to know what had become of Elsie; how she had turned out—in

short, whom she had married, and how the union had progressed. Sam Moore and Tom Fielding had been the two most likely suitors, unless my memory deceived me: and it was upon Tom—no, upon second thoughts I believe it was upon Sam, that fortune and Elsie had finally smiled. Mrs. Samuel Moore! Can I imagine little Elsie Willard as Mrs. Samuel Moore? I repeated the name to myself; I tried to think of her as a wife, as the mistress of a household, as the mother of a little tribe of Toms and Elsies. But I could bring no recognizable image of such a person before my mind. All I could see was the pretty, bewitching, laughing, mocking, sentimental Elsie Willard of twenty years ago, with her roguish nose, her innocent lips, her perilous eye, her lightsome figure. Age could have no effect upon such a creature; she was too much what she was ever to become anything different. As for Sam Moore and Tom Fielding, I had no difficulty in fancying the changes that had come over them. Sam was now a portly and prosperous farmer, like his father before him; and Tom—well, Tom had a genius for inventions, and was to-day, perhaps, an eminent electrician, with an office in New York and

correspondents in London. Sam had a thick red beard, flowing over his chest. Tom had reinforced those handsome eyes of his with a pair of spectacles, and was a little bald on the back of his head. But Elsie must be Elsie for ever.

As I trundled down the hill, feeling more and more at home every moment, I recalled my old friends Sam and Tom very distinctly. They were about my own age, and we had been pretty constant companions in those days of rustication. As a member—albeit in retirement—of the most distinguished seat of learning in the United States, I suppose I may have assumed some airs with these young fellows; they were country-bred, and I dazzled them with the jargon of the college yard, and with my talk of Boston, and Parker's, and Morris Brothers, Pell and Trowbridge's minstrelsy, and Maffit and Bartholomew's pantomime, and the crew, and the nine, and the hazing, and the football match. But a boy is, at bottom, only a boy after all, though his technical rank be that of a sophomore, or even of a junior; and after a while they got accustomed to my bragging, and I dropped it, and we associated together upon a less artificial and irksome footing. We went

fishing, shooting, and skating together; I gave them some instruction in the manly art of self-defence, and Sam, at least, gave me evidence that my lessons had not been in vain. There was a great contrast between the two boys. Sam was bold, resolute, and acute; but his most obvious trait was a disposition towards practical jokes, dry humour, and general comicality. He could always make you laugh, and he would laugh himself; but neither his laugh nor yours was apt to be a purely good-natured or mirthful one. It was always at the expense of somebody or something; though there was often genuine wit in his sayings and doings, too. He so easily maintained superiority over the majority of his fellows by his tongue and his audacity that he seldom had to resort to any more primitive and direct methods; but he could be fierce enough upon occasion. When he and I and Tom were out shooting in the woods one day, he got into a dispute with Tom about no less a personage than Miss Elsie Willard—with whom, of course, both the boys were in love, as what available young man was not? Suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, Sam passed from the ordinary chaff and taunts into a furious rage; he actually

levelled his gun at Tom, and, had I not got hold of the weapon in time, I believe would have emptied a charge of duck-shot into his body. Being foiled so far, he rushed at him, threw him down, and falling upon him, began to pummel him in so vicious a manner that, had he not been interfered with, poor Tom would have got some serious harm. From rage, he put on a demeanour of sullen and dumb moroseness, and stalked off homewards by himself in a most sinister manner. The next day, however, he appeared much as usual, and never made any allusion to his outbreak; and Tom, who was the soul of good nature, forgot and forgave it, I dare say, as soon as his bones stopped aching.

Tom was much the more remarkable and likable fellow of the two. There was a poetical look about him; he had light chestnut hair waving over a broad white forehead, and great pre-occupied brown eyes, with long eyelashes. Whether he really wrote poetry I know not, and I never asked Elsie; but he was imaginative, and had a turn of mind at once analytical and synthetical. He was always pulling things to pieces, and contriving some way of putting them together to better

advantage. People said he had a mechanical genius, but I should rather call him a natural inventor—having a mind that was averse to accepting things as they are, and was prone to introduce simplifications and improvements. An inventor and a poet have many qualities in common, but they work in different materials. For the rest, Tom was often eccentric in his behaviour—having an individual way of doing things, not from affectation, but because his mental processes did not move in the hackneyed grooves, but had a course and action of their own. He was, as I have said, sweet-tempered and obliging, and singularly ingenuous and artless, even for a country boy; but he had a great love of beauty, an inclination towards luxury and splendour—his daydreams on such subjects had a smack of Haroun Alraschid in them. It was in this direction that Tom's failings were to be sought; he was frail on the side of the senses and emotions; there was no adamant in his composition, and, I fancy, not much constancy. But what is a boy but a bundle of possibilities? There is no telling (and, so far as his companions are concerned, no caring) how he may finally turn out.

Bewitching Elsie used to tell him he was a goose; but she said it in a way that made being a goose seem worth while. Sometimes I used to think she cared for him much more than she pretended; but I by-and-by came to the conclusion that her common-sensible little heart really preferred Sam, who, no doubt, would make her more comfortable, by keeping her under better subjection than Tom could; besides which, Sam was quite a match (as beaux went in Pinefield) from a financial point of view; whereas Tom's father, formerly a lumber merchant, had lost a fabulous sum of money (ten thousand dollars, I think) in a speculation, and was now a not over-prosperous carpenter, and sometimes got drunk in a harmless and unobtrusive manner. He was a man of some education, and fond of reading; and he had copies of all Fielding's novels, the contents of which he knew almost by heart; for his own Christian name was Henry, and, when he was a little mellow, he would demonstrate at great length that he was a lineal descendant of the famous novelist.

By this time I had entered the main street of Pinefield, and was within a few rods of the hotel; but had, as yet, neither recognized nor been

recognized by any one. My plan was to leave my horse and waggon at the hotel, and to engage a room there, and then to go straight to old Josh's, discover myself to him, receive his embraces, and learn from his amiable garrulity all the news, good and bad. I had no difficulty in carrying out the first part of my programme, except, of course, the initial difficulty of inducing the landlord to reveal to me which (of the group of critical and unconciliating gentlemen leaning and sitting about in various attitudes in the bar-room) he was. A hard-featured, dissatisfied person was this landlord, looking past you as he conversed with you, first on one side, then on the other, as if you were standing in the way of all that interested him in life; though there might be nothing behind you but a spittoon or a three-legged chair. He was very different from the landlord of my day, old Mr. Wiper, who used to call everybody "dear boy," and who kept the butt-end of a cigar permanently in the corner of his mouth, and never, while I knew him, put on a coat. So I asked the present incumbent none of the questions that were on the end of my tongue; on the contrary, I made haste to get out of his weary and irritated

presence, lest it should come into his head to inform me that poor old Wiper was no more. I wished to begin, at least, my revisitation of Pinefield at the cheerfullest end of the story. Accordingly I left the hotel, saying that I should return in an hour or two, and turned up the street towards the abode of the Rev. Josiah. The setting sun shone level across the pleasant vista; the yellow leaves of the elm-trees cast a golden shadow; there was Buttrick's grocery store on the other side of the way, with the same old shop sign over the door. Everything was the same, even myself for the moment; I felt as if I were going up to recite my lesson, which I had learned, or neglected to learn—was it twenty years ago, or only last night? I recognized the very slopes and hollows of the side-walk beneath my feet. And now, from this tree, it is just thirty-three paces to Josiah's doorstep; I know that, without raising my eyes; and to prove the accuracy of my recollection, I will take thirty paces before looking up. I did so, and paused almost within reach of the door-knob. Then I lifted my head, pleased to have remembered so well.

But my pleasure had a quick revulsion. Upon

the door-knob was fastened a rosette of black crape, with two long streamers hanging down to the threshold. All the blinds of the house were closed, except those belonging to the room which used to be mine. Some one had died in the house, and the dead body was still within. Some one; but who? While I stood in hesitation, doubting whether to go back or to proceed and know the worst, a head appeared at the open window already mentioned. I knew at once to whom it belonged, though, perhaps, had I met him in other circumstances, I should have passed him unrecognizing. He was sadly changed, indeed, but he could be no one but old Josh. Willard.

Chapter II.

This unmistakable evidence that Elsie was no more quite quenched my enterprise; I had not the heart to knock at my old friend's door; and it was easy to see that he had not recognized me, if he had even noticed my presence. So I turned round and went slowly back to the hotel. A tall, rather stout man was standing on the steps; he

wore a reddish moustache and close-cut whiskers, and was dressed in a roomy suit of black broadcloth. He looked hard at me as I passed him, with a pair of keen impenetrable grey eyes; there was something in the look that impressed me vaguely, though, preoccupied as I was, I noticed it less than I might otherwise have done. I turned into the hotel parlour, and sat down near the window. I wondered why the girl's death should have affected me so much; and, again, I wondered that it did not affect me more. Had I been in New York, say when the news reached me, I should have uttered an exclamation, perhaps, and thought no more of it; but here, in the very village in which I had known her, it was different. It was strange, too, that I should have happened to come here just at this time. I had been present at the opening of the drama of her life; and now, it seems, I was destined to witness its close. What had passed in the meanwhile? Had her life been a sad or a happy one? Was she really dead, after all? It was hard to conceive of that vivacious little existence being extinguished—and she was still a young woman. And but a day or two since —perhaps this very morning—she had been alive!

Was her death sudden or lingering? These and many other questions arose in my mind and demanded to be answered. But who should answer them?

"Excuse me," said a voice at my elbow, and I looked round and saw the gentleman with the red whiskers, "excuse me, but isn't this——?" and he mentioned my name.

As soon as he spoke I knew him. His voice had altered very little; it had the same rather harsh and grating but jovial intonation as ever; a cold, defiant sort of joviality proceeding from determination rather than temperament. I got up and took his hand. He shook mine once, hard, and then dropped it. His smile was also as I remembered it—a comical wrinkling of the eyes and cheeks, soon over; but the face itself had changed considerably.

"I'm glad to meet you again, Moore," I said; "though——" I paused, reflecting that, if Elsie had indeed been his wife, condolence was more in order.

"Yes," he said, glancing me over; "we're both here on the same errand, I suppose. Sad business. Seen her father?"

"You are the first I've spoken to. I came here by accident; all I know is that piece of crape on the door-knob."

"She died night before last, I'm told," said Moore, in his hard voice, drawing his fingers down his jawbone. "Funeral to-morrow."

"You—then she was not married to you?"

He glanced at me again, with a surprise that rapidly merged into a cold suspicion—as if he fancied I were making game of him, or testing him in some way. But he probably perceived that I was innocent of any such intent, for he presently grinned again more drily than before, and said, turning partly away, "I never was a marrying man, sir."

"We are speaking of Elsie—Willard—that was?" said I.

"Married Tom Fielding," returned Moore in a brisk tone. He took a paper of chewing tobacco from his pocket, and put a quid in his mouth.

"Oh! Fielding, was it? When I was here last she seemed more—however, that was only my inference. Is Tom in town?"

"You're rather behind the times—the times hereabouts, anyhow; been abroad, haven't you?"

"Twelve years of it: long enough."

"Yes. Well, the world moves, you know."

"And what about Tom?"

"With his wife, I expect; charitable to suppose so, at any rate."

"You don't mean dead?"

Moore nodded. "Five years ago," he added. "Took after his father."

"Poor Elsie! How long had they been married?"

"Let's see. How long since you left? Twenty years. Well, I guess she married him a couple of years or so after that."

"And he drank himself to death! She must have had a sad life of it, poor girl! She was bright enough when I knew her."

"Well, it got to be pretty bad all round," said Moore, rather callously, as it seemed to me; but whether the callousness was real, or a matter of habit, or assumed to disguise a different feeling underneath it, I will not be sure. I remember that twenty years before it used to be said that Moore had been terribly whipped by his father up to the time when he was fifteen or sixteen; and that, when a boy's spirit is strong, is apt to harden

and embitter him. But then, again, why should Moore show any special sensibility on this occasion? Probably the memory of twenty years ago was not nearly so vivid to him as it was to me, for to him the intervening space was not a blank, as to me it was, but was filled up with that gradual daily and monthly and yearly accumulation of little events, which lead us on insensibly to accept the great events, which they constitute. He had seen the successive stages by which Tom became a drunkard; he had noted, and become accustomed to, the slow darkening of Elsie's horizon; in the pressure of his own daily affairs he had even forgotten, almost, that he had ever loved her. Her death had probably long been anticipated as certain to occur; perhaps the circumstances were such that it had appeared a happy release. To me, on the other hand, only the crude outline and exaggerated perspective were visible; and the freshness of the subject to my mind added to the poignancy of the impression. Nevertheless, I could not help thinking that Moore might have spoken a little more tenderly.

"It was her father I saw at the window?" I said, interrogatively. "He has aged terribly.

He can't be much over sixty, but he looks eighty."

"The fact is," said Moore, thrusting out his chin and rasping his fingers across it, "there was ——" He checked himself, and seemed to alter his mind about something he had been going to say. He ended by nodding his head and repeating his previous remark, "It got to be pretty bad all round."

"Do you live in the village, here?" I enquired.

"Not much!" he replied, wrinkling his face.

"I expected to find you a great raiser of asparagus and grapes, and breeder of cattle."

"No, no, sir; that wasn't quite lively enough for me. When the old man pegged out, I put the place up at auction and cleared out. Went to the law school, and put up my shingle in Waterbridge, over yonder. I guess I shall go down to New York and settle one of these days. I'm getting sick of things hereabouts."

"I'm rather sorry I turned up here myself," I observed.

Moore made no reply, though there was in his manner something which made me fancy that he had something to communicate, but could not make

up his mind whether or not it was advisable to do so. After standing about awhile, staring through the window, and humming snatches of airs below his breath, he muttered something about being expected somewhere, and stalked off, leaving me in a very depressed frame of mind. I was not only sorry that I had come, but I was half-minded to go away again at once, and not wait for to-morrow's ceremony. What should I gain by it, or what good would my presence do anybody? There was nothing but pain to anticipate; not an arousing, stimulating pain, either, but dreary and wearisome.

This Mrs. Fielding was not the Elsie I had known; that fascinating little creature had vanished years and years ago. . . . I fell to speculating idly as to the meaning of that remark of Moore's: "It got to be pretty bad all round." There had seemed to be more in it than met the ear. But in what way? Bad for whom? Of course, it was bad for Elsie that she married a drunkard, and bad for poor old Mr. Willard to have a drunkard for a son-in-law; but had Moore intended nothing more than that? Was it not possible that Tom Fielding had stood accountant for some other and worse sin than inebriety?

During the time of my acquaintance with him, he had shown no leaning towards the bottle; that was a vice which I should much sooner have expected in Sam Moore. Therefore, was it not possible that inebriety had simply been his expedient to numb the strings of remorse for a backsliding of a graver sort? Having started this theory, I tried to imagine some crime which, from my knowledge of Tom Fielding's character, I could suppose him likely to commit. In this ingenious speculation, however, I met with poor success; and by-and-by, realizing what I was about, I rated myself for a curmudgeon, and tried to think of something else. But my mind was so dull and out of tune that I could concentrate it upon nothing; and I don't know what I should have done had not some one entered and informed me that if I wanted any dinner it was ready in the dining-room.

I did not care much for the dinner, but I was greatly in need of the distraction, and therefore betook myself to the banqueting-hall with alacrity. It was a great barn-like place, with a long table extending from one end to the other, at the hither extremity of which a small dingy table-cloth was spread, and upon it were set out a great round of

boiled salt beef, vegetables, a pumpkin pie, and a pitcher of ice-water. As I sat down I noticed that a plate was laid at the opposite side of the table, indicating that another guest was expected. I took it for granted that this must be Moore; but the person who entered a few moments later, and seated himself in the vacant chair, was in all respects as unlike Moore as possible.

He was a man of lofty stature and vast frame, but gaunt as a wolf; a thick white beard hung down on his breast, and the hair that densely covered his head, and locks of which fell across his forehead, was also white as snow. The cavernous sockets of his eyes, overshadowed by heavy eyebrows, were enough to render impressive a countenance containing nothing else remarkable; but the eyes themselves had a lambent glow and musing penetration which at once commanded the attention; while the nose was large and rugged, and the forehead high, with a deep indentation down the midst. At a little distance his aspect was almost awe-inspiring; but as he came near a singular benignity and gentleness was discernible in his expression, in the furrows of his cheeks and the lines about his eyes. His broad shoulders

stooped somewhat under the burden of years or infirmity; for, as I contemplated this venerable personage, I doubted whether he were really so ancient as his snowy crown would imply. At all events there was still a spirit of youthful vigour and soundness within him—in his mind and soul—which was distinct from the failure of the bodily part, and would survive it.

Having taken his seat, this august prophet—a kindlier Isaiah in modern garments—clasped his hands upon the table before him, and uplifted his face in an attitude of religious supplication. This action did not take me unawares; it was easy to see that he lived in a world of his own, and had strength and simplicity enough to do so without affectation. The blessing which he invoked was not spoken audibly, however; and in a few moments it was over. He then fixed the kindly glow of his eyes upon me, and said, in a voice which was pitched low, but which carried evidence of great power and volume in reserve—

"I am glad of your company, sir. It is unnatural to eat alone."

"I thank you for the compliment and return it," said I; "though I will qualify it by

adding that some company is worse than solitude."

"How can that be," was his rejoinder, "since a man is nothing in himself, but only as a member of society? The heavenly life is the social life; only in hell does a man pretend to stand for himself alone."

"As to that, I can presume to say nothing; but I should suppose that a heavenly society was a free society—where you meet only the people you want to see."

"Yes, yes," said he slowly, and looking down with a musing air. "Nevertheless, perhaps, there may be this difference between society in heaven and on earth—that here we most want to see those to whom we can be most useful, whereas in heaven we most require those who can be our most effective partners in usefulness."

I did not feel sure that I comprehended the drift of this remark; but I thought it in order to inquire whether my instructor were not a clergyman.

His face changed a little, becoming more grave. "The Lord has delivered me from that temptation," was his unexpected reply. "No doubt I am by nature full as apt as others to claim special relations

with Him; but I am more readily able to detect myself now than formerly. No; if I must give myself a title, possibly I might call myself a poet, but a sort of poet that has never written verses."

"You carry poems in your head—or in your heart, I should say?"

He shook his head. "No, it is the feeling only—the direction of the inward sight; in higher moods; I have not the faculty that you have to fix it in writing."

"Is it possible," I began, feeling not a little gratified, "that you have read——"

He interposed with a slight gesture of his long, finely-shaped hand. "I owe you an explanation," he said; "I spoke without reflection. I know nothing of your name or achievements; I am not in the way of knowing such things. But when I entered the room I had an impression—books; and a certain sort of books . . . . But I seem intrusive."

"You interest me greatly," said I, apprehending a quite stimulating peculiarity in this old gentleman, "and if it would not be unpardonably intrusive on my side, I should like to ask by what principle of divination you can be aware (ordinary

information apart) that I am a writer, and a writer of a certain sort of books?"

"It is nothing, I am sure, extraordinary," returned my companion, with a smile of slight embarrassment or shyness; "at most it is but a development of a faculty common to all men—as when you, for instance, find yourself friendly disposed, or otherwise, towards any person whom you meet for the first time. But such as it is, I assure you that I hope I may cease to possess it the moment I apply it to the purposes of idle curiosity or inquisitiveness."

As this remark might be construed as an implicit rebuke to myself, I hesitated to pursue the topic; and for a time I turned my attention to the dinner, which was the proximate cause of this encounter. My companion did the same, with the cheerful simplicity and heartiness that belonged to him; and meanwhile the conversation was limited to such occasional utterances as the courtesy of the table authorized. But all the while I felt as if my acquaintance with the old gentleman was rapidly increasing; I might even confess to a strong liking for and confidence in him—the sort of confidence that leads one to speak candidly and intimately.

His nature seemed almost childlike in its guilelessness and transparency; but one was aware, also, of a depth beneath the transparency much too profound for ordinary sounding. The quietness of his demeanour, and a certain noble repose and refinement of manner, argued him no country-bred sage, but a man who had been familiar with the best results of civilization; yet this tallied very imperfectly with his present outward guise and situation; he was not of this village—not even, I fancied, of this section of the country. As to his apparent clairvoyance, I was inclined, of course, to minimise its significance. After all, you may pick out a blacksmith by his hands, an ostler by his legs, and why not an author by his self-complacency, or, perhaps, by his aggrievedness? Moreover, it was quite conceivable that my venerable friend might have chanced upon some evidence of my identity without being exactly aware of it.

But I could not suppress a strong desire to know who he was, and what his business in this out-of-the-way region; and as I ate my corned beef and my pumpkin pie, I inwardly cast about how I might respectably get information on these points.

Probably, however, this not very admirable longing of mine must have betrayed its presence behind the veil of my countenance, for I was startled and somewhat abashed when the old gentleman laid down his knife and fork, and said, with genial but subdued earnestness—

"I am really of no importance, sir; but lest my silence should dispose you to think otherwise, I ask your permission to put the chief facts of my life before you."

"I don't know what to say; but I'm afraid I must have been very inconsiderate," was my discomposed reply. But in fact there could be no question that my interlocutor was a person of singular penetration. His rejoinder was curious.

"One cannot do more with a questionable impulse than to restrain it," he said; "for its presence in the mind, not you, but the human nature we both share, is answerable. Besides," he added pleasantly, "I am sure that your impulse is not half so questionable as I am. Well, I am not an American, and this is my first visit to this neighbourhood. I was born in England, and have passed the greater part of my life on that side of the water."

"You are determined to see the naked as well as the clothed regions of civilization," I remarked, as he paused for a moment.

"When I was a youth," he went on, "the army seemed to offer the best means of getting rid of me, and I became a soldier accordingly. I went to India; and circumstances placed me after a while in a position of some authority there, which I heartily misused. At length the great native uprising took place, and I was naturally singled out for special vengeance. But I held my own successfully. High distinction—not inherited; that would not have satisfied me; but achieved by my own force and merit—was in my grasp. I was as happy and complacent as one can conceive; and no mortal obstacle lay before me, or has, to this day."

He paused again, resting his forehead on his hand, and looking down. He resumed in a lower tone—

"One afternoon, as I sat in the shadow of the bungalow, a great fear and horror came upon me, and in a few moments I was a moral and spiritual ruin. As a body decays and drops to pieces, so did my soul, my character, my strength of will

and pride, appear to me suddenly to rot and fall in fragments; and I was left a form of shameful and abject terror. It was only by a struggle that threatened to burst my heart that I refrained from leaping shrieking from my chair, and imploring protection from my very servants. And yet how could they protect me against the nameless and invisible demon, redolent of loathsomeness and destruction, who held me triumphantly in his power, and before whom I cowered in helpless imbecility!

"So I remained in my chair during one hour of that peaceful afternoon, and the horror increased in me every moment. At last I could bear no more. I arose and hurried to the back part of the bungalow. There I found an old servant—one whom I had often chastised and outraged. I clung to him as a child chased by a mad dog clings to its mother. I was clammy and pallid with fear—strengthless, tremulous, whimpering. In a frenzy I besought him to succour me—never to leave me.

"For three years, with intervals sometimes of hours, sometimes of weeks, the horror clave to me; and so did my servant likewise. I had left

the service; I had hidden myself from my countrymen and from my country; I lived among the dregs of the native population, and they despised me too much to slay me. My servant was my master, my guide, and my guardian. He taught me the ways of his people, their language and their religion. And then, one morning before dawn, I crawled on the roof of our hut, feeling that I was alone in the world, and wishing to see the sun arise on what I meant should be my last day on earth. For my servant, my protector, my master, lay dead inside the hut; and the horror was upon me. But, as the sun arose, and the light fell upon me, the horror departed from me, and the demon loosed his grasp upon my soul. In that hour, moreover, it was revealed to me what the demon had been. Since that hour I have had no fear, neither have I been alone; and many things have been open to me that are closed to other eyes."

At this point my venerable friend ended his story, which had impressed me more than I had anticipated, or could altogether account for. I fancied, too, that it had cost him not a little to tell it; for the experience, whether or not intrinsi-

cally an illusion, had evidently been the turning-point of his life. And what had his later life been? Had he become an adept in the mysticism of India? Had he studied their science and magic, and practised their asceticisms, until he had acquired the power, which their wise men are said to possess, over the obscure elements and forces of nature? Be that as it may, there was nothing of the charlatan about him. A deep religious conviction and reverence were manifest in his every word and sentiment; and if he wielded any special powers they seemed to afford him less pleasure than solicitude. But, once more, by what chance had such a man come to such a place?

"Do you remain here long?" I asked him, breaking the rather long silence that had followed his last words.

"I think no longer than to-morrow," he answered. "There was a voice calling me—the sorrowful voice of one wrongfully oppressed; and, as I came across the hill beyond the pastureland towards the south, the rest seemed to be borne in on me. I shall know when the time comes. You also will be there!" He rose as he spoke, and with

a kind glance of farewell at me, took up his broad-brimmed felt hat and went out of the room.

"The man is crazy!" said I to myself. But I did not believe my own assertion. I lit a cigar, and presently fell into a deep reverie.

Chapter III.

I could not get my venerable acquaintance out of my head, nor make up my mind whether he were really a sort of human miracle, or whether accident and my own imagination—and perhaps a little self-delusion on his part—had not conspired to make him appear so. The very matter-of-fact surroundings amidst which our interview had taken place enhanced by contrast its strange and unexpected character. His concluding observations had been somewhat enigmatical. Apparently he had suggested that we might meet again on the morrow at some place whither both he and I were bound. But of course he did not know that my visit here was entirely accidental, or that the only "place" at which there was any likelihood of my being to-morrow was the funeral of Elsie. I had

thoughts of applying to the hotel-keeper for some practical information about the white-bearded sage, but when I recollected what a distraught and dissatisfied hotel-keeper he was I decided not to trouble him. Very likely he would declare that he knew nothing of any such person. So, as evening came on, and the weather was serene and clear, I left the hotel, and once more sauntered up the village street. In a minute or two I was again at the Reverend Joshua's door, and without stopping to think about the proprieties or the responsibilities, I knocked, and was admitted by Joshua himself.

I told him my name at once, and that I had heard of his loss, and asked him whether it would be inconvenient to him to talk with me. He replied, "Oh, no! oh, no!" With something of his old tone and manner, he invited me to enter, but I saw that he did not recognize me. He was much broken, and was evidently incapable for the present of giving attention to more than one subject—that of his daughter. As this, however, happened to be the subject on which I wished him to speak, there was no drawback. We sat down in the little study which was so familiar to me in the old days, and which still presented sub-

stantially the same appearance. But the tops of the books were dusty, as if they had been long unread; and there was no writing-paper or manuscript on the table. Besides the pictures that I remembered (chiefly prints of Biblical subjects) there was a large photograph of Elsie, taken, I suppose, at about the time of her marriage. It was a better likeness than most photographs are; the nose was unhackneyed; she had probably moved from the position in which the photographer had placed her just before the lens was uncovered; there was something very characteristic in the bright, alert attitude. Mr. Willard did not look towards the photograph; indeed, his gaze was not fixed upon anything mortal, but had an abstract quality, as if earnestly studying some scene visible only to himself. It was pathetic to see him. His eyes, once so round and bright, were now weak and dim, and blinked constantly in the lamplight. His forehead was wrinkled upward with a plaintive, forlorn expression; he sat fumbling his fingers together in a numb, aimless fashion, and occasionally raised one hand and passed it tremulously down the side of his face. When I addressed him, he would begin to smile, by mere

force of his innate amiable habit; only now the smile was not intelligent, but mechanical; and when he was fully aroused to what I was saying it would vanish. Often, too, he would mutter to himself, apparently repeating fragments of conversation, the recollection of which happened to be drifting through his mind. By-and-by, however, his extreme preoccupation began to abate; his eyes met mine with a more comprehending glance, and he seemed ever and anon to recall my identity. "It was very kind of you to think of coming," he said at length. "You knew Elsie? Yes, yes, you knew her. But she is gone away from us now—gone, gone away. It seems strange that I should be here, and she be gone. But I would not have kept her—no, no; she could find no happiness."

"She lived with you here ever since her husband's death?"

"Yes; oh, yes, Elsie lived here. Where else should she go? They were unkind to her; they were unjust—they wronged her. And she had so much to trouble her without that. They might have believed her; how could they have the heart to doubt her? I don't really see how any one could have doubted my Elsie. But they did—oh,

yes; they did. And it made her so unhappy that, at last, she died."

"I can't imagine anyone thinking ill of Elsie. What was there against her?"

"Oh, the same thing, you know—the same thing all these years and years. One would think that to have lost the child was enough; but they were like the Jews who shouted for Christ's blood—they must have a victim. Think of my poor little girl being made a victim; and she was as innocent as Christ was. But perhaps you judge as the world did—perhaps you, too, judge by appearances?"

"I don't know what you are speaking of, Mr. Willard. I have heard nothing of Elsie since I was your pupil here twenty years ago, and she was a child of fourteen. But, if she has been suspected of any crime, I am perfectly convinced beforehand that she is innocent of it."

"Oh, yes, she is innocent; but the innocent are crushed, and the guilty—what is done to the guilty? Could the guilty be more unhappy than she was?"

By degrees I drew from her father the strange story of Elsie's life. Indeed, as soon as he fairly comprehended that it was all news to me, he

needed no urging; he overflowed with the narrative, and could hardly have been more minute and circumstantial. For many years past, no doubt, he had lived it over and over in his mind and heart, till all his own life, both mental and actual, was tinged with it. He had entered so sympathetically into her tragedy that it had become his own, and he and she were one with regard to it. Nay, it might well be that his loving sorrow for her was more poignant and inveterate than hers for herself; for I am disposed to think that Elsie died, at last, rather from sheer weariness and discouragement at the emptiness and aimlessness of her existence, than directly from the event that first made shipwreck of her happiness. She was sensitive, of course, to suspicion and unkindness; but her nature was perhaps hardly profound enough to vibrate, during any considerable period, to the blows of even so cruel a fate as that under which she suffered. But the reader will follow me more intelligently when he has heard what that fate was. I shall not attempt to reproduce the words or describe the manner in which Mr. Willard told his story; both the space and the skill are lacking. And then, as I knew, the coffin lay in the

adjoining room, with its silent occupant; and yet so vividly did the surroundings bring back the past, it seemed as if, at any moment, Elsie might open the door, and come laughing in upon us. . . . . But no; death is sincere, and never goes back of his word.

Mr. Willard confirmed my impression that Elsie had at first been engaged to Sam Moore. But although he was, from the worldly point of view, the better match of the two, or perhaps (considering her wilful independence) partly for that very reason, she finally forsook him and turned to Tom Fielding. I fancy, moreover, that Elsie may have repented of Sam the more readily, because she found it impossible to control him. That he loved her there seems no reason to doubt, and the love of such a man partakes of the thoroughness and stubbornness of his character, though it may appear deficient in tenderness and grace. But he was too proud and too narrow to adopt the chivalrous attitude; there was an element of crude savagery in his nature which prompted him to feel and assert his mastership. Now, Elsie was as little likely as flame to submit to undisguised oppression, and whoever attempted it must be

prepared to scorch his fingers. At first, however, Sam and she had got on together pretty well; for Sam was full of cleverness and a sort of quaint humour, and could be very good company when matters were going his way; and Elsie, on her side, enjoyed his vigorous and racy contact as long as it was a novelty to her. Nor were their first quarrels altogether deplorable; they were lovers' quarrels, made to be made up. The first serious difficulty turned upon the question of personal liberty. Elsie thought—or said she thought—that she still had a right to flirt; meaning, by that term, flirting in the New England sense, which is merely accepting civilities, more or less tinged with gallantry, from other persons besides one's future husband; and the fun of which lies in drawing the line between allowable and unallowable gallantry as fine as possible. Flirting is pleasant at all times, but especially so when one is engaged; not only because the discrimination as to the dividing line becomes more subtle and exciting, but because the lady, by a sort of paradox, can occasionally allow herself to be more fascinating than she would otherwise venture to be, on the following plea—that being engaged, miscon-

struction of her intentions is, of course, impossible. But though this argument may serve with the other men, it is not so apt to commend itself to the one man in particular; at all events, it was flatly disallowed by Sam. "You belong to me," he said, "as much now as ever you will; and I won't stand other fellows fooling round my property."

"The property, in this case, Mr. Moore, happens to be not your pocket-book or your potato-patch, but a young lady named Elsie Willard, who can speak for herself."

"You don't speak for yourself in a way to make people respect you."

"Well, I'll reform so far, that I'll never speak to one man again—and that's you!"

"If I'm only to be one of a dozen, do as you like."

"There's not one man in a dozen who would dare to treat me as you do."

"No man would marry a girl who treats everybody else as if she were engaged to them."

"You'll find there are better men than you who'd be glad to marry me on any terms."

"When you find such a man you may tell him from me he's a fool."

"If I were looking for a fool, I've found him already," said Elsie, with scarlet cheeks and a toss of her head; "and I never want to see him again!"

These were hard words; and though Elsie might have forgotten and forgiven them, Sam was of a less easy temper. He would not compromise. If a reconciliation were to be effected, it must be on his terms. Perhaps he was rather too sure of his game. He did not believe that Elsie would actually jilt him. Elsie, on the other hand, was aware in her secret heart that Sam's objections were reasonable; and the exhibition of his jealousy, if made in a comfortable manner, would by no means have displeased her. But Sam's manner was not comfortable; it was intolerable. He had behaved like a brute; he was not repentant, and if this were his style before marriage, what would it be afterwards? After crying and fuming over the matter in private for a week, she went to her father, and told him that she hated Sam Moore, and would rather die than marry him.

"Oh! oh! Why! why!" exclaimed the mild little clergyman. "What has Sam done? Dear me! I thought you were very fond of each other."

"He has been hateful!" Elsie declared, with a sob, "and I never really loved him. I only—took pity on him! And he doesn't deserve it!"

"Well I declare! But couldn't you make it up somehow? You mustn't hate anybody; and Sam's a very good fellow. I'm sure he loves you—he told me so himself; and he can make you so comfortable."

"I should think you, at least, father, would know me too well to suppose that I care about being made comfortable!" exclaimed the young lady haughtily. "It isn't much that I ask—I only ask for love, and nobility, and honour, and—generosity! I have been mistaken; but it shall be for the last time. I will never love any man again."

Nevertheless, at that very moment (such are the intricacies of the feminine heart) Elsie was considering whether it were not within the bounds of possibility that she might exchange a few words with Tom Fielding on the way home from the post-office that evening. Moreover, it so turned out that this contingency came to pass; and Tom, on that and subsequent occasions, so improved his opportunities that, in short, they were married;

and the late Mr. Praed, had he been alive, might have found in the story the materials for a very clever and ironical bit of *vers de société*. But, in reality, there was not much fun in the affair after all. Poor Elsie liked Tom very well, and could turn him round her little finger; but it may be doubted whether she would have been in such haste to marry him, save for the necessity of showing all the world—or at least that section of it which abode in Pinefield—that she was not the girl to wear the willow for Sam Moore or anybody. I will not say that she regarded Tom as nothing more than a stick to beat Sam with; but she did apply him to that purpose among others; and derived, let us hope, all the pleasure and profit that could be expected from the operation.

As for Sam, his behaviour was dignified and becoming. He did not affect a boisterous unconcern, neither did he let himself be overcome with despair; he looked grave whenever Elsie was mentioned in his presence, but never spoke bitterly of her; and it is said that, on meeting Tom for the first time after the new engagement was announced, he shook hands with him. Still, there were some acute persons who declared their belief

that Sam was harder hit than other persons imagined. Be that as it may, he was present at the wedding, congratulated the bride (who looked adorably lovely, and who was whimpering when he took her by the hand), and retired with the respect of the assembly; and the general opinion was that Elsie had made a goose of herself in discarding him. Two or three months later his father died; and Sam sold the farm and lands at a good price, and disappeared from Pinefield. For two or three years nothing more was heard of him, though there were occasional rumours that he was making good progress studying law at Cambridge. Later, he settled at Waterbridge, and had lived there prosperously ever since. When Tom Fielding died, it was prophesied by some sentimental sooth-sayers that Elsie would now complete her destiny by becoming Mrs. Moore; but the prediction was was not verified. Moore did, however, call upon Mr. Willard, expressed friendly sentiments towards him and his daughter, and intimated, as euphemistically as he could, that in case Mrs. Fielding should be in need of assistance of a substantial nature he was well able and very willing to furnish it. Now, the fact being that the deceased Mr. Tom

Fielding had left his wife entirely destitute of means of support, and dependent therefore on her father—that good old gentleman, in the guilelessness of his heart, took upon himself to say that he thought the offer would be as acceptable as he was sure it was kind. But when Elsie heard of it she fiercely stamped her foot, and passionately affirmed that, sooner than be beholden to Sam Moore for a cent, she would work her fingers to the bone, or starve in the streets. It is needless to remark that she proceeded to neither of these extremes, but lived with her father, in tolerable material comfort at any rate. Perhaps, if she had accepted Sam's money, he might have made her other offers; and so her career might have turned out very differently.

But Sam seems to have been unfortunate as regarded his relations with Elsie—not so much that he intended ill, as that he did not attempt to carry out his intentions quite in the right way. They never came to an understanding. Yet there could be no doubt about the sincerity of his pecuniary proposition; for he afterwards wrote to Mr. Willard that he had placed a considerable sum of money in the bank to Mrs. Fielding's account, and that she was at liberty to draw on it whenever

she pleased—adding, that he had bequeathed the said sum to her in his will, and that she would receive it after his death in any case. But Elsie would have nothing to do with it; her pride would not suffer her to accept anything, unless she were offered that and everything else into the bargain. And Sam's pride would not suffer him to risk offering everything unless something were accepted to begin with. This is the way human beings behave, in spite of history and experience. But we are anticipating. The most important event of Elsie's life occurred long before this—indeed, within two years of the time of her marriage.

Almost from the first it had needed no clairvoyance to perceive that the marriage was not made in heaven; at least, it did not maintain itself upon a heavenly footing. Elsie had dismissed Sam because he did not leave her free enough; Tom, perforce, left her free enough, for he had not the strength to control her; and still she was not happy. She made no scruple of informing him that a man was not a man unless he could make a woman fear him as well as love him, and that he could not expect to be loved unless he was feared. Tom knew how to do many things, but to make himself terrible to

Elsie was a feat beyond his powers. He could not absolutely knock her down, and if he attempted to scold her she turned the tables on him in a moment, for she possessed in perfection that faculty of putting her opponent in the wrong (no matter how bad her own case), which is one of the most effective weapons of civilization. The upshot of it was, that there was little tranquillity in the Fielding household; Tom, naturally one of the sweetest-tempered fellows living, gradually became cowed and morose, and took to keeping by himself in his little workroom, where he was busy trying to solve the problem of some invention upon which he had staked his fortune. But in due time another invention came into existence which, their friends hoped, might be the means of healing the young couple's misunderstandings. A baby was born to Elsie—a little boy, wholesome and lovely enough, by all accounts, to have come straight from Paradise. They called him Tom; and the name was taken as indicating that the original Tom was to be forgiven for his docility and want of violence, and that all was to go well.

But alas for the optimists! Elsie certainly seemed to love the child; and there could be no

question about the father's affection; but apparently they could not agree as to the best way of testifying their parental solicitude. Before the innocent little mortal could stand upright, much less take part in the conversation, animated discussions had arisen as to what educational advantages he should enjoy, whether he should be brought up as a Baptist or a Unitarian, whether his domestic training should be strict or lenient, and as to which one of a hundred other alternative courses were the most advisable; until it seemed likely that, between so many conflicting schemes for his exaltation, the poor little Thomas must come emphatically to the ground. In fact, he had been theoretically carried through his entire career, mental, moral, and physical, from the cradle to the grave, several times, before he had had time, practically, to discriminate between fresh milk and boiled, and but for his serene infantile unconsciousness of all the plans that were being devised for his advancement, he would have been a sophisticated and *blasé* man of the world before he was yet out of babydom. Meanwhile the elder Tom's invention still hung fire, and there was a prospect that, should no other obstacle impede the little

Fielding's future progress, he might come to a standstill for want of food and clothing. The father troubled himself but little on that score; he had no idea of the value of money (as the phrase is), and seemed to think, as his wife told him, that bread and butter came by nature, like reading and writing. She, on the other hand, perceived the perils of their financial situation very clearly, and ascribed all the greater weight to them on account of her husband's indifference. She demonstrated to him time and again that they were on the brink of ruin, if they had not already tumbled over it; and when he replied, "Oh, no, my dear; it isn't so bad as that!" or, "Just wait a few months, Elly, and we'll have more money than would fill this house," she would ask him scornfully whether they were to live on old pieces of wire and glass-plates in the interim (Tom's invention was in the line of electricity); or she would clasp her baby in her arms, and exclaim that it was a sin to have brought it into the world, and that it would be no crime, under the circumstances, to hasten its departure to a better one. "I walked into this trap with my eyes open, and I suppose I deserve the conse-

quences; but you, my poor little darling, have come here all ignorant and trusting and helpless, and the only reparation I can make to you would be to kill you!" "By George, Elly, it breaks my heart to hear you say such things, though I know you're not in earnest," Tom would exclaim, with tears in his eyes. And then Elsie would answer, "Some day you will know whether I am in earnest or not!" in a tone of such tragic import that Tom would gaze at her bewildered, and wonder whether he were out of his senses, or she. But thereupon he would retire to his little work-room, and there, poring over his invention, hope and cheerfulness would revive in him; he would foresee a bright future in store for them all, and would fall to whistling and humming over his work, as if there were no misery in the world. And Elsie, coming to the door with a remorseful impulse, perhaps, meaning to ask his forgiveness and tell him that she loved him in spite of all—would hear these cheerful sounds, and stop and ask herself with a sneer whether she were still fool enough to believe that this man had a heart!

So things went on with temporary alleviations,

but not growing decidedly better or worse, until the baby was eleven months old. He was a hearty and happy little fellow, could stand upright with the help of a chair, though he had not turned his attention to walking yet, could smile and point his finger, and could utter a surprising variety of vowel sounds, diversified by occasional gutturals and linguals. He could also weep lustily when the crisis seemed to demand it, and could fracture objects which much older persons than he would have hesitated to attack. Almost all these accomplishments he had taught himself. One day in the latter part of July his mother set forth in quest of huckleberries, taking Tommy with her in his little basket-waggon. The place she went to was a short distance outside the town; a tract of elevated pasture land, diversified with masses of rock and clumps of brush, and bordered upon by a broad, wooded region. Arrived at her destination, she took the child from his waggon and seated him on the ground beneath the shade of a large hickory, filling his lap with chips of mica-covered rock by way of playthings. Then she took her two-quart tin pail and began to pick the berries. It was then about three o'clock in

the afternoon, and by the time her pail was nearly full almost three hours had elapsed.

For these details, as well as for those which follow, there is only her own account to go upon. She said that, during the first hour or so, she kept in Tommy's immediate neighbourhood; and though once in a while the bushes or the rocks would shut him out from her view, she would soon catch sight of him again, and always he was serenely and contentedly at play. Once she went up to him and gave him a handful of berries and a kiss—the last kiss that he ever received from his mother in this world. After that she wandered farther away in search of berries, and may at one time have been distant from him as much as two hundred yards. At all events, when at length she returned to the spot where she had left him, he was no longer there. At first, she was scarcely alarmed; she thought that the child must have crawled away, and that he certainly could not have gone beyond the reach of her voice. But no answer came to her call. And when she began to realize that her baby was actually lost, she was beside herself with terror and anguish, and ran hither and thither at haphazard, shrieking out his

name and then stopping to listen, though the beating of her heart so filled her ears that she could hear nothing else. Sometimes the fluttering of a leaf near the ground would make her think she had found him, or the call of a bird would seem to be his voice, and her soul would flame up with wild joy, only to sink in worse despair the next moment. . . . . At last a new thought came into her mind—a hope suggested by despair itself. She relinquished her search, and ran homeward with all the strength that was left in her.

Chapter IV.

Elsie's hope was, according to her own assertion, that her husband might have come to the pasture, and either in joke, or for some reason, have carried the child home. It was a most improbable hypothesis, but it was not impossible. He was not given to practical joking, least of all to such a cruel kind of joking as this; but then, she told herself, he might not have known that she was at hand, or the child might have met

with some little accident that made it desirable he should be taken to the house. So the distracted mother ran across the fields to the village, and reached home panting from exhaustion, and trembling from head to foot—her dress torn, her hands and face bleeding from thorns, and her hair hanging on her shoulders. As she came up to the door it was opened, and her husband met her on the threshold.

"Why, Elsie," he said, "I didn't know what was become of you. I was just going to look you up—why, you're all torn, and—Elsie, what's the matter? Has anything happened?"

"Oh, Tom, don't tell me you haven't seen him? You brought him back, didn't you? Answer me!—no—don't! Oh, God! I can't bear it! Is he here?"

"Is who here? What do you mean? Where have you been?"

"My baby! my baby! Tom, my husband, I love you—I do love you! Don't be cruel to me—tell me! Our baby—where is he? Haven't you—"

"What, Tommy? Why I thought he was asleep upstairs. Did you take him with you?"

The husband and wife gazed into each other's eyes in silent terror. At last Tom said: "Elsie, what does this mean? What have you done? What have you done with our child?" He spoke with difficulty, and with a sternness she had never heard in his voice before. She could not answer him. Strength, courage, and hope forsook her all at once. She struck her clenched hands against her face, uttered a broken cry, and stumbled forwards across the doorstep. Her husband put out his arm and partly broke her fall, and dragged her into the house and shut the door, for several persons had been attracted to the place, and were trying to get a notion of what was happening.

For some time all was a blank to Elsie, but when she came to herself, there sat her husband, pale, grave, with his large eyes fixed upon her, waiting for her to speak. There was something in his aspect that puzzled her; something unfamiliar and repellent. She told her story as clearly and promptly as she could; he listened closely, occasionally putting a brief question, and watching her face narrowly all the while. When she had finished he got up, and said, "I'll get volunteers, and we'll go out and look for him. If he's any-

where about I'll find him—alive or dead." He said this quietly, even impassively; then he suddenly stepped close to her, and bending forward, added in a sharp, penetrating tone, "Have you told me all you know?"

"I don't understand you," she faltered. "What more can I know?"

"Well, I thought you might have omitted something," he replied heavily, turning away. "You'll come with us, and show us the place where you last saw him. I'll get a waggon. Then you can drive yourself home. Of course, the rest of us will be out all night, unless we find —something—before."

Elsie rose up, unsteadily, and approached him. "Tom, what is it?" she said in a whisper. "You are so strange. You speak to me so coldly—and you almost act as if you didn't care."

"I don't know; I can't cry and faint, as a woman can; I only feel—as if I were about half dead. Oh, I dare say it's all right. I'll get the waggon, and be here again in ten minutes. Get your dress in order and be ready to come along." And with that he left her.

The volunteers were easily found; indeed, as

soon as the news was made known, all that was needed was to make a selection. The whole village was on the alert, and discussing the matter. It was just before sunset when the party set out armed with horns, shotguns, provisions, and lanterns. The moon was in the second quarter, and the night promised to be clear. The general opinion was that the child would either be found very soon, or not at all. It was impossible that he should have gone far himself, since he could not walk. He might have fallen down some place and stunned himself, or worse; or he might have crawled under a bush and gone to sleep; or—somebody might have carried him off. But this, which might seem the most probable hypothesis, was generally discredited. Nobody would take a child of that age, and a case of kidnapping had not been known in that neighbourhood for a hundred years. "We'll have him before bedtime, dear boys, if he's in this living world," said old Wiper, the hotel-keeper; and he expressed the prevailing sentiment.

Under Elsie's guidance they were soon at the pasture, and found the hickory tree and the baby-waggon standing beneath it. On the grass,

likewise, were the bits of mica with which the child had been playing. The first passion of Elsie's emotion had spent itself before she came out and confronted her fellow-townpeople, insomuch that some of them had remarked that she looked rather cool about it; but when she saw the bits of mica lying there, the nerves of her face seemed to contract or shrivel; her eyes half closed, and she pressed her hands over her bosom. At that moment she felt that she had become old, and would never be young again.

The searchers, having carefully examined the place and the surroundings, settled the details of their plan of operation, and departed, each man by himself. Tom was the last to start; and Elsie had hoped that before going, he would come to her for a farewell kiss and word. For, now that her baby was gone, the harsh and complaining demeanour which she had been accustomed to adopt towards her husband, and which had been more external than real, had fallen off like a mask, and she longed unspeakably for the tenderness and countenance of his affection. But, by some fatality, as it seemed, which she could not comprehend, this first time that she had needed

his love was also the first time that he had withheld all expression of it. She had told herself, however, that this apparent reticence was perhaps due to the stunning effect of the shock he had received—that it was involuntary or unconscious. But now, surely—now, if ever—at this moment of parting, he would say or do something to show that he felt, as she did, that this great calamity had swept away all their peevish disagreements, and had drawn them closer together than any good fortune could have done.

In truth, he half turned and looked at her, as she sat in the waggon; and there was an expression in his face of mingled wistfulness, grief, and doubt. She leaned forward, trembling and piteously smiling; then all at once that dull, repellent light came into his eyes again; he turned his back on her, and tramped away through the underbrush, and was out of sight in a few moments. Elsie was alone. Mechanically she gathered up the reins and drove back, jolting over the ruts and stones, to the village. When she got to the house, there was her father. He helped her down from the seat, held her in his arms and kissed her silently, and led her indoors.

"Thank God for you, father!" she said, clinging to him; "I have no one but you now." He said very little, but she felt comfort in his presence; she knew he loved her. They stayed together all that night, waiting for the news. Sometimes, in the distance, they could hear a gun fired or the faint echo of a horn. Each time Elsie started and trembled. The dawn began early; Elsie saw it slowly whiten the eastern sky, and advance through all its pure gradations of loveliness and splendour Then she bent her aching eyes towards the distant belt of woodland from which she expected the returning searchers to emerge. And then she gave a scream and sprang to her feet; for there, just below the window, as if he had risen up out of the earth, stood her husband, haggard and dishevelled—and alone.

Her father hastened downstairs, and the two men spoke together for a few moments in low tones, but what they said was indistinguishable to Elsie. When they entered the room, Tom dropped wearily into a chair, and ask if he could have any brandy. He gulped down a few mouthfuls, and leaned back with a sigh. Mr.

Willard inquired whether all the others had been heard from?

"There will be nothing worth hearing," Tom replied. "By the way, Elsie," he added, keeping his eyes averted from her, "have you got the brooch you wear on your dress, that forget-me-not brooch, you know, that I gave you before we were married?"

She put her hand to her throat. "I must have dropped it somewhere," she said; "I have missed it since yesterday."

"How far is Stony Pond from here, should you think?" continued Tom, slowly looking round at her. She thought he must be a little out of his head, the question was so unexpected, and apparently so idle.

"About two or three miles, I should say," she faltered.

"Haven't been there lately, have you?"

"No, Tom. Won't you lie down, dear, and get some rest?"

"You haven't been boating there, I suppose?" he went on doggedly. "I shall rest by-and-by—all in good time. Well, are you going to tell me what you did yesterday, or must I tell you?

Come, Elsie, it's no use. They are going to drag the pond——"

Elsie sat rigid, with staring eyes, feeling all her life running out of her. Mr. Willard interfered. "My dear Tom," said he—and there was something almost like severity in his usually gentle voice—"your first duty now is to your wife. If you bear ill news, let it come to her from you tenderly. Is it not hard enough as it is?"

"It's harder than you think, sir," Tom replied. "But since she won't speak, I must. Stony Pond is a little over two miles from the pasture on the other side of the woods. We were beating up the woods most of the night; but about half an hour before dawn, I and one or two others got to the pond. It ain't very large; but it's deep, and has a soft mud bottom. We saw a boat out near the middle. One of the men stripped and swam out to it; I don't know what he expected to find. He got the boat ashore, but there was nothing in it—nothing except this." And at this point Tom held out his open palm towards his wife. In it lay the forget-me-not brooch.

She looked at it, but without seeming to comprehend its significance. Her mind was pre-

occupied in another direction. "I don't believe it!" she said, as if speaking to herself. "Drown my baby! no one would do that."

"How could the brooch be in the boat, since Elsie herself says she only missed it yesterday?" It was Mr. Willard who put this question.

"You are not the only one who has been puzzled by that," Tom replied. "And if Elsie can't explain it, some of them will think she dropped it there herself."

"But I told you I was not near the pond"—she began; but then she broke off, rose to her feet, and, with her eyes fixed fearfully upon her husband, tottered across to Mr. Willard, and clutched him by the arm. "Father," she cried, "don't you see—I understand him now—he thinks I drowned my baby! look at him—he believes it! Ha, ha, ha!—Oh!"

"If you are not a madman, or a scoundrel, Tom Fielding," exclaimed the little clergyman, waxing great and formidable in his indignation, "tell her she is mistaken! Face me, sir! Dare you say my daughter is a murderess?"

"I shall say nothing but what I know," returned Tom, "and you shall know it, too. You have not

heard what has been going on in this house for two or three months past. If she has said it once she has said it twenty times, that it was a sin to bring a child into the world, if there was no chance for him except to starve or be a beggar; and that it would be no crime to put it out of the world; and that the only way she could compensate it for having become its mother would be to kill it. Aye, those were her words, and she can't deny them. And when I asked her not to talk so, even in jest, she said, 'I am more in earnest than you think!' Well, I was used to her ways, and I didn't think so much of it then. But yesterday, when she came in, looking so wild and scared, and told me the baby was lost—why, those threats she had made came back to me like a stab. The child couldn't have lost itself, and who was to steal him? And she had been away with him four hours, and no one had seen them in that time. She says she was picking berries in the pasture; but she might have travelled ten miles, baby and all, in that time. I tell you the thought struck me, 'She may have done it!' and I couldn't get rid of it. It wasn't that I believed it; I couldn't actually believe it; but the thought that it might

be took all the soul out of me; I didn't feel half alive; and so I couldn't comfort her, or kiss her, or say good-bye, even, until I could be sure that I had wronged her. And I said to myself, then, 'I'd sooner have killed the child myself, and have killed myself afterwards, than know that its mother did it.' Well, then, we came to the pond; and when I saw Buttrick swimming for the boat it came over me that now we should find a clue. And what we did find was the brooch. How did it get there? I saw it on her yesterday morning. She was alone with Tommy all the afternoon. This morning it was in the boat at Stony Pond, and Tommy was lost. I don't know what to believe, unless I believe either that she's guilty or in a miracle. But it isn't what I think or believe that counts; the trouble is, the men who were with me at the pond think the same, and by breakfast-time everybody in Pinefield will be talking of it. I tell you, what I most hope now is, they'll never find that child's body; for if they do, it will go hard with Elsie, whether she's innocent or not."

"If you have finished, sir," said the little clergyman, rising up in a stately manner, with his arm round Elsie's waist, "my daughter and I will

go. This is no place for her. If it is your purpose to send the officers of justice after us, you will find us at my house. I will only add, that better men than you or I have been saved before now, by believing in what you call a miracle. But the true miracle here is, that a man who has lived with my daughter for two years as her husband, should believe in the possibility of her guilt. May the Lord give you repentance. Amen!"

Tom sat in a sort of gloomy apathy, with his head resting on his hand, and neither stirred nor spoke in reply as the father and daughter moved towards the door. But at the threshold Elsie paused; she began to breathe hurriedly, and her cheeks to flush. She disengaged herself from her father, ran back to Tom, and threw her arms round his neck.

"I won't leave him, father," she said. "I'll stay with him, whether he believes me innocent or not. He shan't lose his wife and his child the same day. And he shall not believe me guilty! Tom, my dear, poor boy,—look in your wife's eyes, and say if you can think that of me! I have said many wicked things, I know; but it was partly because I knew I could never have the heart to do

them. And as for the brooch, dear, I think I can tell how it may have come there."

"You'd make a new man of me if you can, Elsie."

"Well, you know, I went to kiss him just before ——" here her voice quavered and failed, but she struggled on after a moment—"just before I was going to another part of the pasture, and he put his little arms round my neck; and I think it must have been then that the brooch came unpinned, and fell into his lap. And then, I suppose, he used it as a plaything, you know, instead of the mica. So, you see, if he was carried away by any one, he would have taken the brooch with him; and in that way it might have been dropped in the boat. And I don't believe he's drowned, Tom," she added, laying her cheek against his; "I don't feel as if he had died in any way; though, perhaps, he may be dead as far as we are concerned. I mean, that we may never see him again."

Tom sat with his head bent, and so still that one might have thought him asleep. But suddenly his unnatural apathy gave way, and he burst into a passion of weeping, the tears streamed down his cheeks, and he hugged his wife to his heart, and

sobbed out all his misery and remorse, and prayers to be forgiven. "I would trust you against my own eyesight, Elsie," he said; "and now I know that I never did believe it; for if I had, I should have been at the bottom of that pond at this moment. And now let them say what they dare about you, no harm shall ever come near you, darling, while I am alive!"

At certain crises of our lives, when we are wrought up to a high pitch of excitement and exaltation, it seems as if we were stronger than all the world, and as if all wrong and misfortune must give way before so lofty a mood, and only what is good and noble have power thenceforth. But then the slow and heavy days and weeks and years begin their inevitable work again, and heap up over us their imperceptibly increasing burden of petty fatigues and ignominious cares; and the weak places of our nature are sought out and tried, and perhaps give way at last; until in the end we find ourselves sinking back again into the slough out of which we fancied we had escaped for ever. And so it happened with poor Tom and Elsie. For a time they struggled against the chilling suspicion which encompassed them on all sides. They told

their story, and strove to bring the matter to some final test. But, though no conclusive evidence was ever found against Elsie; though Stony Pond was drained and its foul bottom searched in vain; though the whole country round about was roused to find some traces of the missing child—all ended in a cruel uncertainty, which left the doubters free to doubt still, and made those who were more charitably-minded timorous of avowing their opinion. To live amidst such misgivings is a trial to the strongest soul; and Tom Fielding was not one of the strongest. His courage gradually weakened and gave out; by way of cheering himself, he took to drinking, and in a few years he was no better than an amiable sot, with no manliness or ambition left. His wife clung to him faithfully; but she could not save him, or greatly help him, even; she had no practical, persistent energy, or knowledge of the world. Her temper, which had never been imperturbable, deteriorated under the pressure of mean and mortifying annoyances, and she became chronically fretful and unhappy. They fell at length into a very sordid and unlovely way of life; she lost the beauty which had once been so brilliant and fascinating, and which, under happier

conditions, might have remained with her till old age; and as for Tom, he looked like the lazy and worthless drunkard that he was. When he died his best friend could not have felt other than relieved. Since that time Elsie had lived in her father's house. A new generation of young people had sprung up in Pinefield, who had no personal knowledge of the gloomy story of Elsie's youth; and she kept wholly away from society, nor was her face often seen on the village streets. But more than once, as she passed a group of children on their way to school, or trooping homeward, she would see them look askance at her, and hear them whispering among themselves, "Who is that woman?" or, "Don't you know? She's the wicked woman that killed her baby!"

When the Reverend Joshua Willard had finished telling me his tale it was after midnight. I opened the window and breathed the pure night air, coming cool and fresh from across the high pasture land. The stars sparkled peacefully in the silent abyss; and I was glad to think that Elsie had gone beyond all earthly troubles. Yet it made me indignant to remember that she had died under the blight of that unrighteous suspicion. Oh for some cham-

pion—some angel from heaven, if need be—to come and vindicate her memory before the world, even now when she had left it!

I withdrew from the window, and saw in old Joshua's face a certain expression which I comprehended without need of words. I followed him into the little entry. He opened another door, and we entered the chamber in which Elsie's body lay.

The coffin rested upon a table in the centre of the room. Some flowers were laid upon it. At the top a part of the lid was turned back, showing the dead woman's face. It was with some hesitation that I brought myself to look at it. I feared to find the alteration too melancholy. But I was pleasantly disappointed. The colourless countenance, though thin almost to transparency, had lost whatever lines of pain and sorrow time may have drawn upon it. Her dark luxuriant hair, with a few white threads in it, framed her delicate cheeks and forehead; her long, thick eyelashes lay heavily, as in sleep. Something like a smile—the dream of one—touched her pale lips. She seemed to be at rest.

Mr. Willard had been standing beside me with

the lamp; as he moved away I looked up and saw on the other side of the coffin a tall, slightly bowed figure, with snow-white hair and beard. The shadow on that side of the room made him but indistinctly visible; the outlines of his form seemed blurred, and the shadow itself entered, as it were, into his substance. He advanced with a perfectly noiseless step until he bent over the coffin; for several moments—while one might count fifty, perhaps—he gazed earnestly and with a most benign expression at the face upturned to him; then he raised his hand, which contained a bunch of white roses, and laid them on her bosom. Then he looked up, and for the first time his eyes met mine. There could be no doubt as to his identity; he was my mysterious friend from India. He made a gesture of his head toward Mr. Willard: I turned and saw the clergyman in the doorway, where he was arranging some hangings that had becomed disturbed. In a moment I looked round again; but the venerable figure was no longer there.

"Mr. Willard," I said, "come here a moment."

He came immediately, lamp in hand.

"Where did those flowers come from?" I

asked, pointing to the bunch of roses on Elsie's bosom.

"Oh! oh! how beautiful! Why, I didn't see them before. Dear me, they are the loveliest of them all. Ah! I see—they are yours?"

"No, they are not mine," I replied.

"They are no purer than she is," remarked the old man. "How happy the dear child looks! Shall we go now?"

At the door I turned to cast one more glance round the room. It was empty.

Chapter V.

The funeral was held at the little church in which the Reverend Joshua had for so many years officiated; but the service was conducted not by him, but by the present incumbent, a very worthy and commonplace gentleman, who either did not appreciate the situation, or felt that it was beyond his scope; at any rate, I remember nothing of his address, except his observing that "our sister" had led, "so far as was known," an honest and upright life, and that we were to believe that

the Lord, in His infinite mercy, would order all things for the best, and so on. He made no allusion more direct than this to the tragedy of Elsie's life; and I think that the congregation (which was quite numerous, nearly filling the church) were upon the whole content that their parson, being the good limited creature that he was, should not have attempted any loftier flight. But, for my part, I wished again for that miraculous champion, who should arise and see justice done, and the innocent and helpless cleared of unmerited reproach.

I occupied Mr. Willard's pew, which was among those nearest to the pulpit, and therefore to the coffin, which lay at the pulpit steps. Just after the service commenced Moore entered the church, and, coming down the aisle, seated himself beside me. He sat with folded arms during the minister's address, and with an expression of face as if he had locked it up for the occasion. The address, like all tedious things, seemed to last longer than it did; and when it came to an end there was a general rustle and movement throughout the church, and for a moment everybody hesitated, waiting to see whether or not any

further formalities were to be observed. I turned to Moore, intending to say something to him; but, before I could do so, my attention was caught by a tall figure passing along the aisle—a figure which was just then abreast of our pew. He moved on, with a leisurely but dignified gait, until he reached the place where the coffin stood; then he faced quietly round, and confronted the assembly. I need not say that he was my venerable sage of the day before; and I regarded him with more interest on account of the hallucination (for as such, upon reflection, I considered it) of last night. He certainly appeared far from wraith-like, as he stood there, one hand holding his old wide-brimmed hat, while the other rested on the coffin's lid. He was a very human and very real object; and his countenance had all the kindness and winning gravity of yesterday, but kindled with a certain light of power and authority which was new to me, but which fitted the place and the occasion. Indeed, his whole bearing showed that this was far from being the first occasion of his facing crowds and speaking to them, and, if need be, controlling them. He possessed the mysterious and

irresistible gift of leadership—a man to make men feel that he could show them the way to their own best aims better than they could find it themselves. His appearance at this juncture caused not so much surprise as a sensation. Probably half the congregation supposed that the other half knew who he was, and wherefore he was come. As for the minister in the pulpit, he may have taken him to be some venerable brother-divine, who had officiated at the dead woman's christening; and what Mr. Willard thought, I know not; but he leaned forward over the railing of the pew with a singular brightness of expectation in his face, as if he deemed that he and his were now about to be compensated for a lifetime's unjust disgrace. For my own part, I remembered my vague wish for a champion, and awaited what should happen with very genuine interest.

As the old man returned the gaze of the people all their stir and restlessness ceased, and the church became completely still. His voice entered this stillness so quietly and melodiously that its first tones seemed to have reached the mind before they had been recognized by the external ear. There was no effort nor noise, but a clear, full, soft

distinctness that won the heart while it aroused the attention. The words that he spoke formed themselves as pictures to the understanding; yet, in themselves, they were severely simple, and as spontaneous as the voices of the woods and streams.

"It has been said," he began, "that a murderer will sometimes return to look at the corpse of his victim, though, by so doing, he risks discovery and arrest. It may be remorse that brings him, or curiosity, or hate that follows even beyond the grave. He may come, wishing that he could undo his deed, or he may wish it were to do again. Be that as it will, it is not the victim, but the murderer, who should have our pity then!

"Is there any one in this church who is guilty of the death of a fellow-creature?—I do not say, whose hands are stained with blood, but who has taken from another that which gives life its sweetness and honour; who has made another the butt of public suspicion and contumely; who has cut her off from human sympathy and fellowship, and condemned her to that most blighting solitude that is peopled with the faces of those who were once her companions and her friends? Is the man who has done this less a murderer than he who strikes in

hot blood, once and for all? But so much the more, if he be among you to-day, does he claim your charity and compassion: for she, his victim, is but dead, and all her pain is over; while he lives, and thinks, and remembers still, though he bears in his heart the corpse of his own manhood, which has lain festering there this many a day.

"But is there any one here who would draw back from such a man, and make him, too, an outcast? Not so, my friends; for if this dead woman was murdered, you are the accomplices of her murderer; he is not only your brother-mortal, but you are his fellow-criminals; he aimed the blow, but you gave his arm force to strike; if he condemned her to starve in solitude, you made the solitude that starved her; and if suspicion and contumely broke her heart, it was by you that she was despised and suspected. Forsake him not, therefore, but make his cause yours, for verily you stand or fall together. Nay, his cause may have more hope than yours; for he, perhaps, was sorely tempted and provoked; while you aided him only that you might feed the evil self-righteousness of your hearts, which delights to say to your brother or your sister, 'Get thee behind me, for I am

holier than thou!' And again, he perhaps repents; while you glorify yourselves, and say in your hearts, 'We have done well!' And lastly, he perhaps was betrayed by circumstances into worse evil than he meant; but you were the circumstances that so betrayed him.

"Yet, woe to him who raises his hand against a mother, and strikes at her through her child! As nothing in our nature is more sacred than her love, so he who outrages it has profaned the purest region of his own soul. Nor shall it avail him that she whom he smote had wronged him, and that he but sought to make her feel his pain as her own. He whose suffering has not taught him to assuage the suffering of others has suffered only as the beasts do, that have no souls; and shall such an one lay his unclean hands upon the awful sword of justice? Justice has no part in him, for justice is without fear, and he has so feared the imputation of his own crime, that sooner than accept it, he has stood by and watched this woman languish and die for a crime of which she was innocent—nay, which never was committed! And now he would see her put into a dishonoured grave —this guiltless woman whom he professed to love

—for lack of the few honest words that would purify her memory. Does he think, because she has gone whither earthly praise or blame can no more reach her, that he is absolved from the debt he owes her? Let him take heed lest the day come when he shall read his condemnation in the eyes of that same infant, now a man, whom he has robbed of his mother, and who will require from him the uttermost farthing——"

But at this point the speaker was interrupted. He had been followed from point to point of his extraordinary harangue with breathless attention and a surprise that had no time to declare itself save now and then by an involuntary murmur or unconscious movement. I doubt whether many of the hearers perceived the goal towards which each successive sentence of the speaker was leading them; but I, sitting as I did beside Moore, was previously made aware that he was deeply wrought upon. His arms, at first folded tightly across his breast, gradually relaxed, until they dropped at his sides; and his face, which had in the beginning resolutely confronted the venerable stranger, flinched once or twice, and at length bowed down, and was hidden. Then I turned away, unwilling

to witness the struggle which is the sorest of all to which human nature is liable. But all at once, taking his breath between his teeth with a sort of groan, Moore got to his feet, and stalked down the aisle to the pulpit steps. There he turned round upon us all—a ghastly figure.

"You see me, all of you, and that tells you why I am here," said he, in a voice whose harsh abruptness could not conceal the wail of anguish beneath. "That old man, whoever he is, and however he knew it, has told the truth. I took the child. It was an impulse, not premeditated. I had come, meaning to speak to her; but no matter! I had not thought, either, that she would be suspected; and then I meant to give it back; but, somehow, I never did. When Fielding died I tried to gain her good-will, and if she would have married me I meant to bring her and the child together so; but all that fell through. All I could do was to give the boy the best bringing-up that was to be had; and that I did; and all my money is his; but I shall never look him in the face again; for I wanted her to care for me because he was her son, and she would not; . . . but she did at first, though—didn't you, Elsie?

Oh, my God! I have killed her, and I loved her!"

A month or two after these events I happened to be in Washington, and the friend at whose house I was staying said, during dinner, that we were to meet that evening one of the most remarkable Englishmen living. "I mean Lord M——," he added.

I replied that I had of course heard of him, but that, beyond the fact of his distinction, I knew very little about him.

"I imagine nobody knows much about him," my friend answered, "but a little about such a man goes a long way. He is the most influential man in India, for one thing; it is said that, but for him, there would have been another mutiny last year. He is on the inside track of the natives, and that sort of thing. Yet he will never accept any sort of official authority; his power, enormous as it is, seems to be entirely moral and personal. He's one of the largest landowners in England, as I suppose you know, and he must be frightfully rich; but he's as simple in his ways and talk as one of our own presidential candidates. You can see he's got it in him, though, the moment you

clap eyes on him. There are no end of stories about him, most of them apocryphal, I guess. Hindoo enchantments and that sort of thing—adepts, Rosicrucians—I don't know! He's worth looking at, anyhow, though he may not talk to you much."

"Is he a married man?" I enquired.

"No. But, by the way, a young fellow has lately turned up in his suite who is called his private secretary, but some folks say he is an adopted son. It seems rather odd; and if his lordship were any other man than he is, there might be some gossip about it. The impression is that it's the son of some friend of his who has pegged out, or something of that sort."

"What is the young gentleman's name?"

"Some ordinary name—I don't know. He's a good-looking chap, and has nice quiet manners. However, we needn't bother about him. Are you ready?"

We reached the house at which the reception was held in tolerable time, but the rooms were already much crowded. I drifted aimlessly about for a while, seeing ever and anon somebody that I knew, but not attempting to reach them. At

length I came upon a senator from New Hampshire, with whom I was acquainted, talking to a tall gentleman, whose back was turned towards me. Near them stood a grave young fellow, scarcely twenty years of age, with dark curly hair and handsome blue eyes. He reminded me of some one—I could not at the moment think of whom.

The senator caught sight of me. "Oh" he said, "glad to see you. Lord M——, I want to make this gentleman known to you; he's lived a number of years in England, I believe—maybe you've met there before."

Lord M——wore plain evening dress, except for a star that glittered on his left breast. His air was lofty and commanding, in spite of a slight stoop in the shoulders, and the dark glow of his eyes was in marked contrast with his white hair and beard. He took my hand with a grasp of quiet cordiality, and said:

"We have met before, but it was not in England."

"Your hand feels like flesh and blood," said I, "but I hardly know what to think."

We conversed for a few minutes on indifferent subjects. At length his lordship said: "I heard

two weeks since that a friend of ours, the Rev. Mr. Willard, had died. By the way——" here he turned to the young man with the blue eyes, "Fielding, let me introduce you. This gentleman used to know your grandfather."

The young man came forward, and then I knew who it was that he reminded me of. The boy was his mother's son. "It all seems very strange," I remarked to Lord M——.

"The really strange thing is human nature," he returned. "I know of nothing that is not easy to unriddle in comparison with that."

THE END

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